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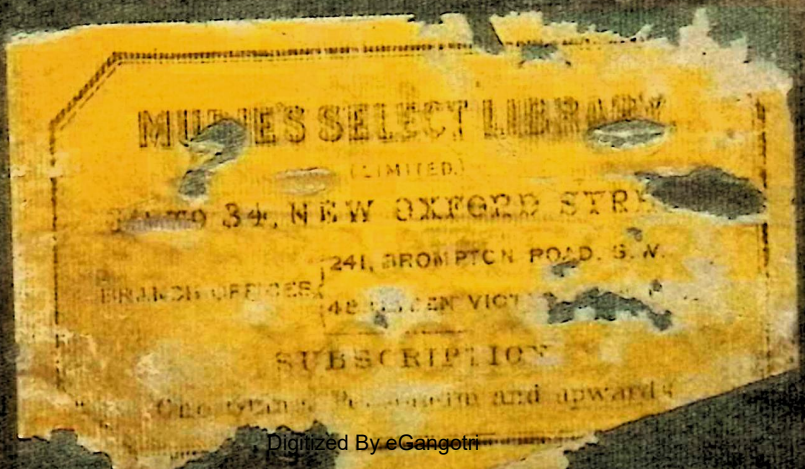
CASTLE OMERAGH



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CASTLE OMERAGH

By FRANK FRANKFORT MOORE
Author of "The Jessamy Bride"
"The Conscience of Coralie" "The Fatal Gift"
etc etc

WESTMINSTER
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE & CO LTD
2 WHITEHALL GARDENS
1903

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CHAPTER I

THE cries of the curlews sounded fitfully through the silence of the night; the birds were flying inland from the coast, and within the space of an hour would have reached Lough Dearg, for the mist that was coldly sweeping up the glen from the Atlantic, like a vast phantom army moving without sound or sigh through the shadowy land, never brought confusion to the curlews. They went from sea to lake in as straight a passage as was taken by the sound of their plaintive notes, steering without the help of stars, and turning not from their course by the allurement of the light shining with watery ray from my window high up in a turret of the castle.

I stood at the window listening, while the cries of the first flight waned away, and while the fitful single pipe of a wanderer from behind came to my ears like a startling echo of a sound so long passed away that one has forgotten it.

And then came dead silence; only at unaccountable intervals the mysterious whisper of the sea seemed to fall from the drifting mist like the plaint of a living thing—something that moves on wings through a night when all the world is asleep. Often as I had listened to the whispering sea, its sound had never lost its mystery to me. It never seemed to repeat itself. It told me a different tale every night. It is the only story-teller that never wearies a listener. The sea is the harp of God.

I remained with my face turned toward that

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mysterious mist which the light from my candle made strangely and irregularly luminous—with my ear turned toward the mystery of sea-sounds for I knew not how long. My window was open on its hinges, and I felt the clammy fingers of the night upon my face. I had more than a little matter to think over at this time, and for certain the hour and place were favourable to coherency of reflection, provided that one were content to think only of things that are mournful as the song of the daughter of King Lir who was turned into a swan in the heathen days, only to be restored to her beautiful womanhood when the first Angelus should be rung in an Irish Convent.

It so happened that I had no thought that was not tinged with mournfulness this night. How could it have been otherwise? I had just returned to Ireland from America, to find that the whole island from north to south was not green, but red. Every river from the Bann to the Shannon ran red with blood. Every lake from Lough Neagh to Killarney was red with blood.

Oliver Cromwell, with his hands still reeking with the blood of the King, had brought his army to our dear Irish land, and there had come to us the rumour of a hideous massacre in the town of Drogheda, but we could get no tidings of my brother Harry, who had, during my absence in America, gone northward from our Clare Castle to help in the defence of that unhappy town before its fall. But as several months had passed since something of the tale of the siege had reached our ears, and no word had come to us of Harry, we could scarcely hope that he had escaped the fate of his companions. Still we had hoped and hoped, and every eve had brought despair to our hearts.

Naught, indeed, could have been more pitiful

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than our life in those days. Our hope came in strange tides. It would now and again surge up within us until it seemed to be a certainty ; and at the time of these spring-tides of hope we were almost boisterous and cheerful ; but I think that to any one who might have noticed us, this spring-tide cheerfulness of ours would have semed much more mournful than our neap-tide despondency.

When at last there came to us the definite news of my brother's fate, the end of our terrible suspense was too much for us.

It was an officer of Clotworthy's Regiment named Purdon who brought us the news. He had travelled far for this purpose, and although his home was at the southern end of Lough Dearg, while my father's Castle was in Glen Omeragh, on the Atlantic coast of the County Clare, he had ridden across the bog and climbed the ridge of hills to convey to us his news, without tarrying a single night under his own roof.

The moment I caught sight of him on the mountain track, trying to urge his tired horse to face the ford of the Lough, and so to cut off a good six miles of his journey, I felt sure that he rode with tidings for our ears. When he saw me running toward him, he ceased to push forward his horse. He drew rein at the opposite side of the ford, and sat on his saddle, with downcast head.

Then I knew what was the nature of the news that he brought to us.

I did not wait to send him hail across the narrow water, but plunged into the ripples that spread feathers of foam over the stones of the ford, and stumbled across. But he did not seem to see me. He sat there still, with his chin on his chest, as though he had been suddenly struck with a dead palsy. His horse was making a long neck to sniff a weed. Far down the shallows of the black tarn a

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heron stood on one leg, with its beak under a pinion. In my overstrained state nothing of the scene escaped my notice.

"You come from the army, and not without tidings, sir?" I cried.

"The army? There are two armies in Ireland," he said, after a pause. He seemed anxious to gain time by raising a quibble.

"Sir," I said, "I beseech you to tell me the worst that may be told of my poor brother. Tell me that he has fallen in battle."

"You told me to tell you the worst, but you suggest that I should tell you the best."

"God only knows what is best, and His will be done. It is not for man to judge, only to weep. My brother is dead."

"Sir," he said, "you have all the pity of my heart. Your brother is not dead; he hath been shipped as a bound servant to the Indies."

His words smote me on the face with all the force of a round blow. I know that I felt the physical agony of a buffet while he spoke—a buffet beneath which I staggered back and gasped for breath. I was a man of peace, but my hands were clenched. Something was burning in my heart. I could only stand there staring at the man until he spoke again.

"Sir," he said, "I knew that my errand was a dreadful one. Nevertheless, it was laid upon me, and I did not shrink from it. You have all my pity."

Then it was that I found my voice.

I know that I raised both arms high without unclenching my fingers while I cried:

"Cursed be the name of Cromwell! Cursed be the name of Cromwell!"

Captain Purdon took off his hat—it was not so broad-brimmed as it might have been, and the tail

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feathers of a wild bird were fastened in it by a silver pin—he took off his hat as I spoke; and the action suggested a cordial measure of acquiescence in my shocking words; but, giving a little start, he began to use his hat as a fan. He had been an officer in the army of Cromwell.

"I have had a long ride, Mr. Fawcett," said he, and there was a tone of an apology in his voice; he seemed anxious to assure me he was in need of a fan.

"God forgive me!" said I. "The words were forced from me, sir; the man is in the hands of God."

"Even so, sir," said Captain Purdon. "An he were in the hands of men—the men of the King's army in Ireland—I mean in the hands of the foolish rebels against the Lord Protector of our rights and liberties, it would go hard with him."

"Who was the Protector of the rights and liberties of my poor brother?" I cried. "Rights and liberties? Sir, I am but late returned from the American plantations, and there I saw enough of the condition of bound servants to make me feel that you spoke the truth when you said that you brought us worse tidings of my brother than the news of his death. Liberties? . . . But you are an officer in the army of the Lord Protector of our liberties—the Lord Protector who protects our liberties by selling us as slaves to the scum of the earth in the Barbadoes. I ask your pardon, sir."

"Mr. Fawcett, I was an officer in Clotworthy's regiment until Drogheda was captured by Cromwell," said he, "but I am so no longer. When I heard the shrieks of those unhappy creatures who had fled to the church tower before it was fired by the order of Oliver Cromwell—when I saw gallant men, gentle women, innocent children—some of

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them English—flung back into the flames, or stabbed to death by the soldiers who surrounded the tower—when I saw young maidens of good birth laden with fetters, ready to be shipped and sold as slaves to the planters of the Indies—sent out to a fate more horrible than can be imagined, then, sir, I ceased to be an officer in the army of the Protector."

"Doth a single Irishman remain on the side of the tyrant?" I cried. "Nay, is there an Englishman left to carry out his lust for blood?"

"Mr. Fawcett, he has at his back the most religious army that ever massacred women and children and priests in cold blood," he replied. "They butcher with texts of scripture on their lips. They kneel down in the blood of their victims, and praise God for having given them the chance to cut their throats. They are the most devout band of butchers that ever hoisted crowing babes on their pikes. I tell you I saw it—I—with these eyes. It was the Lord Protector himself who rated me for my want of zeal in the sacred cause. I had captured a body of Ormond's men, and when they submitted, I gave them quarter. When my Colonel came up an hour later, he shot with his own weapon the two officers who had surrendered; it was when I had sent a challenge to the Colonel that I was summoned to Cromwell's tent and rated for being lukewarm, with appropriate references to the Church at Laodicea. Oh, yes, the Lord Protector's acquaintance with Holy Writ is vast."

"Hath he ever heard the awful words, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord'?" I cried.

"Why, that is his favourite text," said Captain Purdon. "He believes himself to be the sword of God's vengeance. I tell you that he is the most pious man that ever sold a woman, body and soul,

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into slavery. I tell you that those who say Oliver Cromwell is not pious speak a gross falsehood."

"But you will not fight on his side again ?"

"I am wanting in that special spirit of piety which is his—he told me so. I am sorely lacking in that Biblical zeal which takes the form of butchering women on the eve of motherhood," said Captain Purdon in those cold and caustic accents which had still been his when making reference to the cruelties he had witnessed. But the instant he had uttered his last phrase a curious thing happened. The reference to the most revolting of human crimes seemed to awake some terrible memory in his mind. I saw a wild gleam in his eyes, and the next moment he had become a madman. He stood up in his stirrups, and yelled out imprecation after imprecation against Cromwell, in a voice that startled the birds among the sedges at the opposite border of the black lake ; they rose in a flock, and fled across the water echoing his hoarse cries, while they disappeared into the distance.

I stood there astonished at the change that came over the man all in a moment. He had become a raving madman in the twinkling of an eye. His imprecations were too shocking to be repeated. They astonished even me, and I had just returned from a voyage to America ; and all the time the curses were upon his lips, his face was lined with the rage of a demented man. I remembered the story that my brother had once told me of a man by whose side he had fought at Naseby. His son had been struck on the head by a stray bullet, and his brains had been scattered over the troop ; a dash of blood had flicked into the face of the father, and in an instant he had become a raving and raging lunatic, slashing wildly around him with his sabre, so that his officer had been forced to cut him down.

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Here was a repetition of this fearful thing before my very eyes. And all through his blasphemous ravings there ran the thread—the crimson thread—of a memory of the massacre.

"I saw her—with these eyes," he shrieked. "They had piked her husband before her face—her hands were red with the drippings of the steel which she had hoped to thrust aside from his breast; and then the agony came upon her. They butchered her, and it—*it*—we heard the shrill child's cry mingling with the mother's shrieks—the child that had been born between the stabs of the butchers—and she tried to fold it to her breast while the last flicker of life remained with her—I tell you I saw the smile on her face! Oh, my God! I see it now—I see it now! I shall see it till I die!"

With that wild cry he threw up his hands and fell forward on the neck of his horse, and so headlong to the ground. The horse nosed him cautiously and curiously as he lay on the ground, his fingers digging like talons into the earth that was wet about the ford.

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CHAPTER II

A LONG time had passed before Captain Purdon had recovered consciousness, and was able to lay a hand on my shoulder, walking up the glen track that led to my father's Castle; but not a word did he speak to me during this hour, nor yet on our way to the Castle. The man's face was white as the face of one who had just seen a vision, and his eyes now and again had a mad gleam. I noticed, too, that when he stopped on his way to recover his strength, his lips moved. He was whispering his thoughts; but no word that he breathed was loud enough to reach my ear. It was plain to me that he was a broken man. I could see that he had travelled far; but at that time I had no notion that he had made a journey of nearly two hundred miles to carry to us his dismal tidings.

But my father knew it when he met us on our way to the Castle, and took the man's hand.

"You have ridden across the breadth of Ireland to tell us of a sore disaster, Captain Purdon," said he.

Captain Purdon turned his stare upon me, and I saw his lips move as before.

"Sir," I said to my father, "this gentleman is the bearer of the heaviest tidings that ever were borne to your ears. He was overcome with fatigue and the memory of the horror through which he hath passed, but not before he had told me the worst. My brother is not dead. A worse fate is

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his : he has been sold into the degradation of slavery ; he has been shipped with others to the plantations in the Indies."

"He will never reach the Indies," said my father, before the words had been well uttered by me. His quickness startled Captain Purdon as well as myself. "He will never reach the Indies. Before the vessel has been a week at sea my son will have shown what is in him. He shall have become master of the ship. I know him. I know his spirit. He was born to be the master of slaves—the master of men. I know him. There will be no weeping under my roof for the fate that hath befallen him." Then he turned to Captain Purdon, actually smiling while he said :

"Sir, neither I nor mine will ever forget this devoted act of yours. It is because war—even the cruellest of wars—brings forth such acts as this, that it ceases to be a crime and becomes one of the virtues. Let me help you within the home that is still mine, though it is not in my power to say how long it will remain so. Oh, sir, if ill were to befall you for this, I should never hold up my head again."

It was marvellous how the sanguine words of my father affected our visitor. They had scarce been spoken before his head was straight upon his shoulders once more—when he had met my father his chin was upon his chest. A new power seemed to take possession of him, so that he strode forward on the slope to the Castle as though he knew not what was fatigue. He found his voice.

"God grant that if ever evil tidings be brought to me, I may receive them with a portion of your spirit, Sir Gilbert," said he.

"Experience is the best teacher, sir," said my father, "and 'tis my experience of life that tells me that most happenings which we look on as dis-

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asterous have another aspect than that which is immediately shown to us. Even now I can perceive how it is quite possible that Providence hath designed that my son should be shipped to the Indies in order that he may save a shipload of his fellow countrymen from the degradation of slavery."

Captain Purdon stopped on his way, and actually laughed—yes, after a short pause.

So it ever was with my father. There never lived so sanguine a man, and I feel bound to say that, as success generally follows the successful man, so my father's anticipations of good were commonly realized. To be sure, now and again the event that immediately followed his prophecy seemed grossly at variance with his prediction; but upon such occasions he was accustomed to smile the enigmatical smile which every prophet should have at his command, and to say that the matter was not yet over. By such means, he invariably protected himself from that obloquy which is the lot of the one whose predictions do not come to pass. On the whole, however, I am sure that the prophet of fair things is looked on with friendlier eyes, albeit some people with good memories remind him that the events do not happen, than is the prophet of evil, whose predictions are fulfilled to the letter. Indeed, it hath often seemed to me that people easily forgive the seer of the disaster when events prove him to be a false prophet. It is the man who impresses people with his astuteness that is stoned with stones.

Now my father, by reason of his cheery words in season and out of season, was a pleasant man to be nigh, especially in times of trouble. He made his influence to be felt by all who approached him, for he could always point out the bright side of things to such as were despondent, even though the bright-

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ness was no more marked than the patch of sunshine which touches for half an hour only in the month of June the northern face of Glendhu.

I confess, however, that I had never been so sensible of his influence as I was when Captain Purdon had been in his company for an hour or two. It filled me with amazement to see how our visitor, who so short a time before had been lying on the ground, overwhelmed by the force of his own gloomy memories, as well as by the thought of the sad tidings which he was bearing to us, yielded to my father's influence, and (for a time at any rate) forgot his own troubles, banishing (it seemed) every recollection of those terrible scenes that he had witnessed. He talked with my father of the ordinary happenings of our life, just as if he were a neighbour who had dropped in at dinner time—of the increase in wolves, and the falling off in the breed of the wolf hound, of the laziness of the peasantry and their family feuds, which for years had caused more misery throughout the country than all the injustice and ill-treatment of the people by the Viceroys of His late Majesty of blessed memory. In short, the conversation round the dinner table and afterward, when my father and his visitor smoked pipes of tobacco in their chairs in front of the fire of glowing turf coals, was of the simplest character.

I had told my father in the few moments that I had with him in private, something of what Captain Purdon had said to me regarding the massacre at Drogheda, and the manner of his forsaking the army of Cromwell, and now I could not but admire the tactfulness with which my father led him aside from talking upon these matters. Now, considering how close such things were to each of us, and how they were ever uppermost in our minds and in our

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hearts, the dexterity shown by my father in avoiding them in conversation was more than ordinary.

He led on our guest to give some account of his adventures when crossing Ireland from west to east after leaving Cromwell's army, and so absorbed did Captain Purdon become in this narration, that he seemed to have forgotten the inhuman deeds—one of which he had partly described in his mad ravings at the ford of the lake—done at Drogheda. He had passed through many perils on his way to us—for he could account as his friends neither the King's men nor the Protector's—and the excitement which came to him in the telling of his story, and in the questions artfully put to him by my father, took his mind away from the horrible incidents preceding his departure from the army.

And when dusk had fallen after a misty Atlantic sunset, and there came a whisper of wind into the dining-hall, we drew closer to the hearth, and talked of the future of Ireland, the country we had made our own, and with whose fortunes our own were bound up. We all held stoutly to the belief that, the temper and character of the Irish people being as they were, a century should pass before the acts of Cromwell would be forgotten. We did not know at that time that the invader meant to go through the island from north to south trampling down all who opposed him, and grinding beneath his iron heel all that the people thought most sacred. We assumed in our innocence that he would content himself with what he had caused to be done at Drogheda. We could not foresee the horrors of Wexford, of Clonmel in the County of Tipperary, of Limerick, to say nothing of the smaller affairs in the Province of Munster, or of those in the plantation of Ulster, where some of the English Guilds had acquired large estates.

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Beyond doubt we were very gloomy as we sat in the gloom of the oaken hall. The fiery red eyes of the turf ashes on the hearth gleamed out of the blackness, like the eyes of a wild animal lurking in its cave, and here and there a reflecting gleam of red flashed from the steel arms that were hanging upon the walls. And ever and anon came that muffled moaning sound from the Atlantic, like the long wail of a people oppressed for ages.

I suppose it was the influence of this mournful sound floating at intervals, and then waning away through the gloaming of the evening, that affected my father, banishing the cheerfulness which he had displayed during dinner; for of a surety the conversation took a melancholy turn and threatened to fall into a blacker depth of despondency, until he suddenly leapt from his chair, and dealt a kick at the smouldering fire, sending a shower of red sparks up the chimney and a great cloud of the white turf ashes into the hall.

"A pretty sort of host am I!" he cried. "A desperate form of entertainment this to offer to a tired guest! By my faith, Captain Purdon, if you get much more of this you will be longing for the merry songs of the drakes, or the demi-cannon while sending their shot red-hot against the walls of Drogheda. I have heard that they are more given to the use of iron or lead than stone now-a-days; but all was stone in my time; and there are some that discharge the harquebuse from the shoulder, aiming without a rest! We are poor company, Captain Purdon. But we have those at hand who will cheer us. Ho, for Cormac Mac-Cormac, king of the bards! Shout for Cormac, Wat, my son, and the lights—why have we no lights, since the sun hath set hours ago? Zounds, sir, have the good people of Lisnabreeny bewitched all

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the servants in the Castle, that they have no regard for their duties this night? Ho, for King Cormac and his harp! Hath the fame of the bard of Glen Omeragh travelled as far east as Lough Dearg, Captain Purdon?"

Captain Purdon was polite enough to say that it had been for years his hope to hear the renowned bard who was among the many retainers of the Castle. So I hastened within shouting distance of the servants' kitchen, and called for lights, and for the ancient harper to help to give us cheer on this melancholy night. It seemed, however, from the time that the fellows took to carry up the links, that, for some reason or other, they had assumed that the hall was to be left in darkness this night, for they had neglected to prepare any lights.

The truth was, as I half suspected, that the news of my brother's fate had by some mysterious means been communicated to the Castle household, and the whole matter was being discussed from every standpoint in the kitchens, to the neglect of the ordinary and routine duties of the place.

The old harper was, however, always ready to respond to any demand that might be made upon him to maintain the honour of his bardhood, and —but this was quite a minor consideration—the honour of Castle Omeragh. He would, I knew, have been grievously disappointed if he had not been summoned to the dining-hall this night. He had his strings perfectly attuned before he came into our presence, and we became aware of his strain before we could see aught of his form. This imparted an element of mystery to his music, the effect of which he was not likely to underrate.

That strange wail of melody which crept through the darkness of the oaken hall came we knew not whence. At the first, one was uncertain if it were

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not merely the wind sighing and soughing through the pines of the glenside; anon it seemed as if we were listening to the whispering of the sea which a fitful westerly breeze blows far across the land, sometimes full in its tone, and then waning away until one is uncertain if there was ever a sound in the air. The old harper loved to prolong this mystery of his playing. He knew that when he had set his listeners thinking of the mystery of the sea—the mystery of the moaning pines, which none can interpret who has not held communion with the spirits of the dead, he had gone far toward putting them in a sympathetic frame of mind to receive the music which he made with his harp.

The ruddy glow of the turf coals fell now and again upon the long white beard of the old harper, and upon his thin white hands; and, indeed, as he stood under the huge antlers of the ancient elk that hung on the wall above the curtain at the entrance, he looked like the apparition which some people have seen flitting through the glen at twilight, or on nights of fitful moonlight, and they have said it is the ghost of the old Earl of Desmond, revisiting in this fashion his old home. For Castle Omeragh was a stronghold of Desmond in the old days, before he was turned out of his kingdom, and his lands and castles handed over to the men called Undertakers, one of whom was Sir Geoffrey Fawcett, my father's grandfather.

And the strain that gradually grew out of the uncertain prelude was just such an one as might be fancied to come from the Spirit of the Glen, called by the Irish the Banshee. It was a wail that none could hear and remain the same as before—one of those melancholy dirges which the Irish bards of the great Tuatha had ever their fingers ready to play

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upon the death of a prince of the Ard-ri. From the number and bitterness of the feuds of those old days—well-nigh as cruel as the present—it may be taken for granted that the demand for this form of music was large, and that the harpers were kept in constant practice.

I must confess that, under the influence of Cormac's plaintive music, the hopefulness which had come to me earlier in the day, through witnessing the fortitude of my father, ebbed away. I could not but feel that the strain had been well chosen. My brother, who was the hope of our family, would never again enter the hall which had once echoed with his laughter and with the shout of his high spirits and the gaiety of his young heart. I felt that he had gone for ever from us—gone as hopelessly as if we had seen him stretched out before us in his coffin, while the keeners filled the air with their lamentations.

And then, to crown our sorrow, there came through the darkness the sound of the old bard's termulous voice, singing the Keen-MacNoyse—the dirge of the son of a noble. It sounds but poorly done into English, for there are some wonderfully expressive words in the ancient Irish, which have no equivalent in the younger tongue.

He is gone,
He is gone,
He is gone.

Gone from us who loved the sound of his singing,
His singing on the mountain path wet with the dews of morning,
His singing on the blue waters that wrap and lap the hundred islands,
His singing as he stood alone by night clothed with a million stars.

He is gone,
He is gone,
He is gone.

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Let the purple mountains mourn that shall know not his
step on their heather,
Let the seas that swing and sway round the rocks mourn
unto the mountains,
Let the woods mourn moaning on nights when the moon-
light is cold,
For cold with the pallor of moonlight is he that was warm
as the sun.

He is gone,
He is gone,
He is gone.

The young of the sea-eagles wail, for he was their brother ;
The caves where the young seals wallow, swallow the hollow-
voiced waves,
And carry their dirge to the deeps that are hid in the earth,
Till its sound breaks forth in the springs that lament through
the glen.

He is gone,
He is gone,
He is gone.

While the harper sang this dirge, and the soft music of his harp sent its wail through the hall, I sat thinking of the one who had gone from us. My thoughts went back to the old days when we had roamed hand in hand through the woods and up the dark glen-side, none making us afraid—to the old days when we had gone with our cross-bows after the stag, when we had plunged together from the summit of Carrig-na-Nathir, the high rock that forms one of the headlands to our little bay, into the green waves of the Atlantic—the old days when we had taken our rods and stood among the stones of the stream that runs through Glen Omeragh, and returned homeward with a heavy basket of trout —when we had taken our dogs and hunted the otter by moonlight through the windings of the same stream—oh, indeed, it seemed that under the magic influence of that music there came before me in melancholy procession every day that my brother

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and I had spent together. I could smell the scents of the mountain heather—I could hear through the music of the harp the tinkle of the stream among the stones where it ran shallow—I could hear the heavy breathing of one who lay by my side awaiting the passing of the red deer down to its drinking place.

And with all this procession of memories there came the wail of the harp and the keen of the old man.

He is gone,
He is gone,
He is gone.

* * * * *

And then came the flashing of torches through the great hall.

When I raised my head from my hands, I saw that Captain Purdon was gazing with wet eyes into the fire. My father had disappeared.

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CHAPTER III

AND now when midnight had come I was standing at the window of my room in the tower, looking out upon the rolling mist made strangely luminous by the rays of light feebly shed by my single candle. I heard the curlews calling to each other through the night, and after an interval, the curious barking of a flock of wild geese. How could I hear that sound without shuddering, recalling as I did the legend which tells how the birds are the spirits of newly slain men on their passage to the place which they are henceforth to occupy? I had heard this superstition, with thousands of others, from old Gran O'Malley, and albeit that I was a Protestant, I had never lost my habit of imitating her in crossing myself whensoever I heard the cries of the wild geese. Listening to them this night, it did not need that my imagination should be unusually active to cause me to think of them as the souls of the unhappy creatures who had perished at Drogheda.

I opened my window on its hinges and looked out into the swirling mist so faintly illuminated by the light of my candle; but when I turned my face to the cold Atlantic and thought of the ship which was bearing my brother in misery out to a life of horror and degradation, I was overcome. I called his name out to the void night more than once, as if I expected to hear his cheery shout in response. Alas! the fitful moan of the waves of the coast was all that came to my ears.

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I turned again to my room and flung myself down upon my bed, calling out in the agony of my feeling for my brother to come back to us.

In a second I had started up, for the room was filled with strange shrieks, and my candle was overturned. I shrunk up close against the wall in amazement and horror, until I heard the sound of wings beating the air, and felt the wind of something hurling past me in the darkness.

Then came silence.

As I stood breathless, flattened up against the wall, I had time to collect my scattered senses. And then I knew that some strange sea-bird, having lost its way in the mist, had been attracted by my light shining through the window and had flown through the open lattice into the room, overturning my candle, and after beating with its wings all round the wall, finding its way out once more into the night. Often before on nights of mist, the sea-birds have flung themselves against the windows of the tower when these windows were lighted, however feebly, and after a gale we have picked up the poor things by the dozen at the foot of the wall. But the sudden coming of this bird, immediately after I had cried out in my grief, had startled me more than I can tell, and for some minutes after its departure I could almost hear the sound of my heart throbbing within my body.

I seated myself upon the edge of my bed to compose my thoughts before undressing, and I did not relight the candle, though I had a flint and a tinder-box at hand. I had no wish for a light to be a lure to another bird.

After a while I felt a chill touch of damp on my face, that caused me to turn my eyes in the direction of the window, which I had left open. I rose to shut it, and was cautiously feeling my way through

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the dark room, so that I should not overturn the chair which I reckoned to stand between my bedside and the window, when I got another start that almost paralysed me.

There, before me, just where I assumed the window to be, I saw a face staring at me.

No light whatsoever was in the room, and the mist of night without was thrilled by not the least spark; but I saw the face clearly, as though it were surrounded by a pale nimbus of its own, as thin and watery as moonlight, or more like the faint shining of a fish deep in the water, which I have seen on many a night of still waters, when the blades of our oars dripped with luminous drops. The rays that seemed to make the face visible were indeed of the moonlight texture of corpse-candles, thus faint and misty, but they were enough to let me see the features of that face, so that I recognized it in a moment.

That was why I stood there in the middle of the room with my hands still extended, feeling carefully for the chair, for the face which I saw in the centre of that corpse-candle nimbus was none other than my own face.

I, a living man, stood there looking into my own eyes, and considering the expression upon the countenance which faced me and was my own, only far paler than I had ever seen my own in the looking-glass.

I confess that the thing gave me a queer feeling; it gave me, as I thought, the sensation of feeling as a dead man may feel when the disembodied spirit which was the life of man stands face to face in another world with his soul, which I have been told is a finer and subtler essence, though made in the same likeness. I say that for some time I had that impression of being a dead man, and it seemed to

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me that when I tried to reassure myself by drawing in one hand and placing it over my heart, I could not do so. My hands remained rigid, and it was in that nightmare horror and agony that I strove to withdraw them.

Then I felt, not suddenly, but slowly, that I was staring at nothing. There was no face before me. There was no glimpse of light in the room. The luminous haze which had made the sickly light of which I had spoken, gave no suggestion of its presence; and this consciousness had come to me, I say, graduálly, and without the impression of waking from a swoon-like dream.

It was with a sigh which seemed very far off from me, that my hands, that had been outstretched, fell by my sides, and one of them continued swaying to and fro in a senseless fashion. And now I was able to walk to the window and put my hand upon the hasp of the lattice to close it.

I saw it again—there it was out in the mist—my own face, with the eyes staring straight at me; I gazed at it, and then once more I awoke to a consciousness of the fact that I was looking into the vacancy of the grey mist.

I quickly closed the window, fastened the hasp, and stumbled over every article of furniture trying to find my way to the bed on the side of which I had been sitting. When at last I felt the pillow, soft and cold beneath my hand, I almost cried out in that moment, for it seemed to me that I had laid my hand on a dead face. I sat there trembling and shrinking from laying my hand again upon that pillow. I felt that it would be as impossible for me to do so as if in very truth a dead body lay on the bed.

The fear which had come upon me was just the fear which I was wont to have in the nights of my

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childhood, when old Gran, to whom the legends of every island and lake and stream were more real than the happenings of our life day by day, had told us an unusually grim story of horrible witchcraft—perhaps of the handsome young prince, the son of the Ard-ri, who, because he had not asked to his wedding the sorceress, Fither of the Head of Flame, had been changed by her into a grey wolf, at the chapel door, so that all the wedding guests had taken up the chase of him, but had failed to overtake him. And all night long he had lurked among the dark woods of Glen-Marney, howling outside the castle where the beautiful Princess Daireen, whom he had wedded, was lodged. But when the sorceress walked in the wood to mock him at midnight, she forgot that the next day was the feast of Saint Kelvin, and that forgetfulness was her death, for the moment that midnight was past the Prince was no longer in her power, so he sprang upon her as a wolf and tore her to pieces, and then resumed his own shape, except for one night every year, when he is still forced to roam through the glens, howling in the shape of a grey wolf. It was, I say, after hearing some such legend as this when a child that I had lain fearfully awake all through the night, listening for the howls of the ghostly wolf. And it was this same fear that was now upon me, so that I dared not lay down on my bed.

At last I conceived a horror of the room itself, wherein I had slept years of my life. I wrapped a clock about myself and sought the door.

I went without sound down the narrow tower stairway, the steps of which were made of rough-hewn stones; but before I had reached the lower storey, and had begun to grope for the iron hand-rail along the wall, my descent was arrested by the sight of a gleam slipping from under the door of the

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room in the tower which had been my brother's. The light was shining under the door and through the hole of the iron latch.

So strange an effect had this upon me that I turned in order to climb the staircase again, for I dared not for the life of me look into that room, which had been closed and empty since Harry had left the Castle to fight against Cromwell's army. But when I had only taken a step or two upward, I heard the sound of a foot upon the floor, and saw my father come out of the room, closing the door gently behind him. He carried a lighted candle, but he did not see me as he stole down the steps and through the curtain that separated the tower from the long narrow passage leading to the Castle bedrooms and my father's own apartment. His slow steps were those of a broken man. There was even the curious shuffle of old age in his feet, and his head was bent.

My poor father! *Our* poor father!

He had come through the silence of the night to stand beside the empty bed, to lay his hand on the back of the vacant chair. Perhaps to finger the fishing-rod, the wolf-spear. . . . My poor father!

I should have gone to his side to support his steps, and to tell him that he had still a son left. But I felt at that moment that he had just received all the comfort which earth could give him. I feared that it would not be in my power to say any word that should tend to uphold him against the blow which, in spite of his sanguine words to Captain Purdon, I knew he felt deeply.

I waited for a short time on the stone stairs, and then went slowly down to the great door, and so out into the misty night.

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CHAPTER IV

THE old Castle was built on the slope of Glen Omeragh, but it was seated on a mound of its own, and this gave it immeasurable strength as a stronghold, for an assaulting force would have to climb the rocks of this mound before they could hope for success, no matter on what quarter the attack was made. There was, however, a narrow causeway of stones built between the oaken gate and the glen track, for convenience of communication in peaceful times, that is to say, in times when no enemy could be seen from the tower. To look for a truly peaceful time in Ireland would be ridiculous. When not engaged in fighting with England we were quarrelling among ourselves, or with the Spanish or French, who had shown themselves so anxious to come to our help. But so far as our Castle was concerned, it was as an island of peace in the midst of a turbulent sea. Since it was attacked during the days of 1641, without a single stone in its front being displaced, it had known no enemy, and the causeway was always open.

I crossed this narrow path and climbed the glen side until I reached the cliff path. Now, up to this point I had been walking through a damp and misty atmosphere; it made no difference to me, however, for I could have found my way from the Castle to the cliffs blindfold; but it so happened that the moment my feet reached the little track made by the sheep and goats which were wont to climb here

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by the score, the mist cleared away with the rapidity and the cleanness of the drawing aside of a curtain. In a second before my eyes there was spread that magnificent picture of sea and land, which, albeit that I had seen it since my infancy, I never could witness without a certain feeling of astonishment and exultation. These cliffs of Moher are a thousand feet above the Atlantic, and they form a precipitous sea-wall down which a descent is only possible in a few places. From the track at their summit one can see on each hand the most glorious coastway in the world for league upon league.

"See there," said my brother to me one day, "See there, what a chain of fortifications nature hath built to protect from the waves of the Atlantic the country which she holds most precious."

The turreted rocks, joined by sheer cliffs and carried on into the furthest distance, undoubtedly suggest a chain of fortifications that no power could break.

And then there lie at rare spaces between the headlands of more gradual slope, crescent bays of white sand, where the fisher folk can launch their coracles; though the finest year's haul they ever made was when two of the great ships of the Armada were blown ashore in their attempt to return to Spain by the somewhat circuitous course of the West of Ireland, and on the North of Scotland. The headland on which they fell was formerly called Carrig-Iar, or the Western Cliff, but since the year of the great fishing, when every coracle returned from the wreck laden with Spanish dollars, and Spanish swords, and Spanish lace, the cliff has been known only by the name of Spanish Point.

It is certain that the bedstead of carved ebony in which my father slept, and the fine leather which ornaments the bower which was my mother's, came

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from the wreck of these ships, as well as the wonderful steel swords, every blade made at Toledo, and the long-tubed arquebuses with the queer old machine locks, which are still in the Castle armoury. And old Gran O'Malley hath often told us how the poor fisher folk of Killkee and Lahinch, who were never more than a year or two removed from Paganism, were wont for a long time to strut about at fairs in high boots and wearing the great spurs that had belonged to the Spanish captains.

And there, at my feet as it seemed, stood forth that same Spanish Point, for with the clearing away of the mist the moon was revealed, and it hung just over the headland, being long waned, and not rising until an hour after midnight. The moonlight made plain to my eyes all the glory of sea and shore for leagues, so that the night into which I had climbed upon the cliffs was very different from that which I had left beneath me in our glen.

And it seemed, too, that I had left beneath me all that feeling of despondency which had taken possession of me from the moment when the lament of the harper had sounded through the Castle hall. I found that I could think without being overwhelmed by my mournful emotions, of the terrible misfortune that had happened to my brother. Looking out over that glittering silver path made by the moonlight upon the silvery sea, I felt that it was a very good thing to be alive, and thus I could not feel as I had done during the day that was past, that the worst had happened to my brother. I had returned only a month or two from America, where I had heard a good deal of the condition of those poor unfortunate ones who had sold themselves into slavery in the plantations, and yet I could now think with some measure of hopefulness of Harry, who, as Captain Purdon had told us, was already shipped

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off to Barbadoes to endure all the indignities which the rough planters seemed to love to inflict upon those well-born people who came into their power.

I could now think, as my father had thought, of the wonderful aptitude of Harry to adapt himself even to the most melancholy circumstances, of his capacity for making all the people with whom he mixed friendly to himself. I believed that he could soften the heart even of a planter, and as for the women—well, whether they were old or young, they were always ready to take his part, though it might be against their own kin.

Why should he not, by the aid of his invaluable faculty for making friends—for turning enemies into friends—work out his freedom in the course of a year or two? A year or two? Why, by the time I had climbed to the highest ledge of the Moher Cliffs I had reduced the time of his possible servitude to as many months; and before I had stood for more than a quarter of an hour drawing deep down into my lungs of the fresh sweet air that came to me from the West, I was ready to ask myself if it might not be possible that my brother's magical charm had already prevailed with his captors, so that at the very moment when I was thinking of him he was a free man!

Truly I had climbed quite clear of the mist of despondency that had been swirling and curling through the glen all the night.

I had reason to feel glad that I had yielded to that mysterious impulse which had driven me forth into the night to drink those deep draughts of hope from the sea, and little wonder it was that I remained standing for long with my face turned seaward.

"Your eyes look into the West, my son; do you look for help and hope from that quarter?" said a voice behind me.

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I was so startled that I cried out aloud, for I knew the soft clear tones of that voice—the voice of one who I had thought had been dead for more than a year—the voice of Father Mahony, the priest who had lived with us in secret for a year, and had taught my brother and me to speak the French tongue.

There he stood beside me on the cliff, his old smile lurking about the corners of his thin lips—I could see it in the moonlight—the only smile I ever saw on the face of man that somehow gave me the impression of being more grave than glad.

And we had heard that he had been found by a Parliamentary spy in the act of celebrating in a house in the very heart of London, and had been forthwith hanged as a Jesuit plotter, which, I greatly fear, he had been for years, even when under my father's roof!

"Father—Father Mahony, or is it his ghost—this is a night of strange sights?" I said when I had in some measure recovered myself. And, in truth, just at that moment I could not believe that I was looking at the man in the flesh. It had been indeed a night of strange sights and unfamiliar happenings.

"Strange sights, son Walter?" he said. "But you should not look on anything that happens as being strange. Have you forgotten what I was wont to say to you, that nothing can happen without a Divine order? You have seen what you call strange sights. Well, sir, have you duly accepted the significance of each?"

"You are not dead," was all that I found a voice to say to him in response to his asking. "You are not dead, though the report of your falling into the hands of the enemy reached us more than a whole year ago? Ah, Father, you will believe me

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when I say that only one sight could gladden me more than the sight of your face before me at this time. But how have you come hither ? "

"As a wolf goes from its hunters," said he, and I saw that in his eyes the old fire still remained. "You know that the price placed upon the head of a wolf is the same as that placed upon the head of a priest ? I have come from Drogheda."

I caught him by the arm.

"My brother—Harry—you carry a message from him ? " I cried.

"I was with him up to the last," said the priest slowly.

"To the last—to the last ? What, man, never tell me that he is among them who have perished."

"I am here."

The priest spoke the words with infinite reproach.

I threw myself at his feet, and, on my knees, kissed his hand.

"Arise, you faithless Protestant ! it is not for you who belong to the victorious league to be at the feet of one of your victims," said he, with another smile of grave import.

"Ah, man," I cried, "are not we all Irishmen, and Christians ? Tell me of my brother. His message—and you said, 'to the last'—those were your words—what do you mean ? "

"I was at Drogheda from the first, and I abode there until the last," said he. "The town was gallantly defended, but we were as wood opposed to iron. Cromwell is a man of iron, and every trooper that wears the steel cap of the Roundheads believes himself a second Cromwell. I cannot talk of the horrors of the days following the taking of the town. Bloodshed ! . . . Boy, through all ages while the world lasts the name of Drogheda shall remain a crimson stain in the annals of history. The waves

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of ages shall fail to wash away the blot, and the ruthless murderer who came forth as one comes from the shambles—who came forth from the slaughter of innocent women and children, his garments dyed crimson as one who has trodden the winepress—that monster, I tell you, shall receive from every age in the world's history the execration of all just men. He is not a man—he is a curse—a plague worse than the Black Death! There he shall stand through all history—a crimson figure—Cromwell, the pitiless plague—and so long as Ireland lasts the Curse of Cromwell shall mean to Irishmen the worst that the mind can conceive. O! righteous God, judge Thou between this wretch and the innocent souls for whom Christ died. Give him recompense, Thou who saidst 'Vengeance is Mine.'"

The priest had fallen on his knees there at the summit of that mighty cliff, and sent his impassioned prayer out over that dark ocean which stretched on before our eyes, until its waves seemed to break about the ramparts of the heaven itself. And far beneath the overhanging rocks, millions of wild sea birds, startled by his ringing voice, filled the space between the cliff summit and the sea, so that as I looked down I seemed to be gazing into the white depths of a seething sea. You could not see the water beneath them, so dense was that amazing flock of birds, and you could hear no sound of the waves that broke against the cliff face for the wild clamour made by those living things.

And when he cried out those words, holding a crucifix in both his lean hands high above his head, the priest fell prone along the rocky ground with extended arms, and remained with his face to the ground, just as Captain Purdon had lain when he also had been overcome by memories of the massacre at Drogheda.

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When he arose after the lapse of a long time, Father Mahony was trembling in every limb. He put out a hand, and grasped my arm, and when he turned in the act, I saw in the moonlight the awful look in his eyes. He was gazing into empty space, but the expression of his face varied as doth the expression of a man's face when he watches the gradual unfolding of one of Shakespeare's tragedies by a company of actors. From the look on his features and from the way he clutched my arm I could perceive that indeed a tragedy was being unfolded to him by a company of players invisible to me.

His lips were moving, and though at first no words came from him, yet after a space a whispered word or two reached my ears.

"The Abbey of Westminster—I know it—ah, the coffins—they break them open—he lies in one—I see his face as I saw it while he looked on at the burning of the church, and heard with the same grim smile the shrieks of God's ministers in the flames—God's martyrs—is it part of the curse that his features should not be changed by death? . . . hanged in chains, and the mob hurl all that is foul at him—ay, but they trembled before him once—that is the mob . . . the bodies—they are burning them—the smoke arises in the same folds as the smoke of the martyrs shut within Drogheda Church tower. . . . Scattered to the winds — the river swallows up the last of the ashes, and see the mob follow the ghastly head that is borne aloft on a pole—they fling all that is unclean at it . . . it is gone—they have all faded away!"

He turned to me with a start and a sobbing sigh.

"You saw it, Walter—you saw that wild pageant enacted between where the moon hangs and the sea? Ah, there is a God above us. He hath heard

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the cries of His martyrs, the innocent blood spilt on the ground became a voice, that reached the ear of God. Hanged in chains and cut down only to be burned, and the ashes scattered—you saw that strange pageant under the moon?"

"Ah, sir, I saw naught there; but I saw your face, and, watching it, I saw all that your eyes have seen," I replied.

He looked at me curiously for a few minutes, and then turned away with another sigh.

"Such like cometh to one only by much prayer and fasting," said he. "The Church exhorts us to subjugate the body for the increase of the spiritual elements. By the grace of God I have more than once before drawn very near unto the world of spirits which is so spiritual, and they have revealed to me the secrets of the future. May I be in some measure worthy to be entrusted with this gift, which comes direct from the hand of God—that is my prayer night and day. Ah, my son, all that I have seen this night fills me with confidence in the justice of heaven. It is not for men to rail against the Almighty and His acts wrought before the children of men. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' Yea—yea, and Amen."

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CHAPTER V

I MUST confess that, while I felt that it was a great privilege to be a participator, so to speak, in the prophetic visions of so exalted a nature as that of Father Mahony, I was not so wholly carried away by his seer's ecstasy as to lose all thought of what he had said about being by the side of my brother. But I knew that I had no need to remind him of this; he had ever a wide knowledge of men, and I was sure that he was aware of the fact that one would rather hear a few words of tidings of a beloved friend than a whole chapter revealing the future of the greatest tyrant that ever lived.

Father Mahony could not but see in my face that, however deeply impressed I was by his revelation of the doom of Cromwell, I was hungering for his story so far as it related to my brother. Captain Purdon had it in his power to tell us only of the bare fact that Harry was of those who had been shipped to be sold as slaves among the planters of the Indies. But Father Mahony had, I was assured, much more to tell.

He knew that I was hungering to hear.

"He escaped by a miracle," said he, suddenly, knowing my thought and replying to it before I had opened my lips. "When the breach was made in the wall and the assault was made upon the town, he was one of the first to fall; it was only a blow from a clubbed musket that brought him down, and

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soon the dead were piled deep upon his prostrate body. He lay protected by the dead while the work of carnage was being carried on—while the pikemen flung back, at the point of their weapons, all those wretches who tried to escape from the burning tower, and the streets became streams of blood, flowing down all night and all day to the river below the walls. His senses returned to him at last, and he found strength enough to crawl from beneath his ghastly burdens. By the mercy of Providence he did not fall into his enemies' hands until the order had been given out that there was to be no further massacre—it was not any spirit of mercy that called for such an order; it was simply that the tides were low and the bodies that were thrown into the river were not borne out to the sea, and it was known that Cromwell hath a great dread of the plague. All who survived the slaughter—men, women, lads, girls—were put in fetters, without respect of persons—the nobly born being linked to those who had been their servants—and driven down to the river's edge, whence they were borne in boats to three small vessels which lay at anchor in the tideway. I was one of the boatmen, and I contrived to make myself known to my dear son Harry, and to give him my blessing."

"God give you His blessing for it," I said when his voice faltered with the emotion which his recollection of the scene had stirred up.

"You can believe that not many words passed between us at that time," continued the priest, after an affecting pause; "but I promised him to bear to you and to your father his message. 'Tell them not to fear for me,' he said. 'I have already in my mind three plans of escape, and it will go hard if all three miscarry. I will get the better of our enemies—tell them that, and bid them fear not for me.' Those

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were his farewell words, for when I hid a sharp file in the lining of his doublet—I made a pretence of holding him back in the boat, and even struck him a blow on the chest to make manifest my zeal to the Captain—he only cast at me a look that told me he was grateful. That is all my story. There is no need to dwell upon the picture of the departure of those unhappy creatures in the two schooners and the snow that dropped down the river at sunset. But surely their cries reached the gate of heaven itself! Husbands were beaten back from their wives, young maidens well born and tenderly nurtured, were torn from the arms of their mothers, and sent out to a life of degradation worse than death itself. Even the rough mariners, who had at first been lewdly jeering, soon ceased to jeer when they found that no attempt was to be made to keep families together — that the prisoners were put indiscriminately aboard the vessels, and that oft-times a mother was shipped in one craft, her husband in a second, and her young daughter in the third. Oh, I dare not make the attempt to tell you aught but the smallest portion of the scenes on that river on that chilly eve. The sights will be ever before me. The sound of those melancholy voices borne across the River Boyne will ever ring in mine ears. I have said enough for you to know how much could be said of that bitterest day that Ireland has known."

I was overwhelmed with my tears from the moment he had ceased to speak of my brother; it was of the anguish which must have been suffered by those poor creatures who had never known hardship that I was thinking, and my thoughts overcame me quite. I could do naught but weep and sob, sometimes grasping the hand of my friend, and then again turning aside from him and wringing

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my own hands for pity at his rehearsal of the terrors that had overtaken our country.

Father Mahony made no attempt to comfort me for some time. He knew that the story which he had told me was one that struck deep down to my heart, and that my emotion was natural. When I had in a measure recovered myself, he laid a tender hand upon my shoulder, saying—

"Your grief, your tears, show that you are a man, son Walter. To be human is to be manly, and I know that your feeling thus deeply is just why you are able to perceive that it is only by the fire of persecution that the fine gold of the truth can be separated from the rough ore. The noble army of martyrs praise God because they know that their lives were not sacrificed in vain. The cause of Freedom draws its life from those lives that have been yielded up for it. The efficacy of martyrdom is the foundation of the Christian religion. And those poor creatures who are now tossing about on that ocean, stifling to death under hatches, have done more for the cause of Ireland's freedom than Ireland's army has done. Look thither, son Walter; send your eyes out to the hills whence cometh help to the afflicted, and tell me what you see."

I followed with my eyes the direction of his finger. He was pointing to the range of Slieve Gorm, the mountains whose ridges towered above Glen Omeragh in the east, and I saw that just above the uneven line of the mountains' black, there was a touch of the faintest blue—the blue of spring water. Even while I watched, the blue faded into white and became tremulous; it was as if a narrow silver riband were fluttering above the ridges; but the silver broadened every moment, and higher in the sky there was the suggestion of a rose-leaf. Far in the distance of moving western waters the dark-

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ness seemed less deep. Straight from the hills came a great flock of wild swans, high in the air, and as they curved in their flight, the down under their wings shone in a white light.

"It is the dawn, Father," said I.

"It is the dawn, son. A new day is dawning for Ireland. A day that comes with all the glory of sunlight, driving away the darkness of the long night. Look to the dawn, my son, and learn what it means to men. Have I not urged on you in the old days to watch all these wonders of nature, and to strive to read the mystery which they reveal?

"Think what it means—a new day for Ireland! Ireland's long night dispersed as the sun disperses those mists which are now crawling up the sides of Glen Omeragh. Thank God for the dawn, my son—thank God for the coming of the light—the light of Liberty to our sorrow-stricken land!"

We stood there on the summit of the great cliffs watching the day break over the hills, at first with the soft shyness of a blushing maiden discovered in the act of going into her bath, making the long-waned moon seem white and wan, but anon showing over the rifts the silver lances of an advancing army, with waving banners and all the glory of a panoplied force. All the eastern sky became full of light, and below us the waters were a sheet of grey light tremulous out to the western horizon.

And then gradually all the space between the cliffs and the sea became full of life and sound, and this as far as the eye could see on either hand. The countless clamorous sea birds had left their roosting places in the seams and hollows of the cliff faces and had begun their day. The sound of their winnowing wings was like the striding of a gale among the standing corn. The rocks below us on every hand were white with birds preening their pinion

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feathers and diving into the waters, which already bore on their surface immense white patches ; these patches seemed to us, standing so high above them, to be flecks of foam, but we knew them to be floating flocks of sea birds.

The wonder and the joy of all that we saw while the sun was still below Slieve Gorm gave to me at least a feeling of gladness and exhilaration such as I had not known for many weeks. My companion had taken off his hat and cloak, and had seated himself on a rock with his face turned toward the glen, but speaking never a word. I could now see how careworn was his face and how grey was his hair since I had seen him last, more than a year ago—what he had come through during the previous three months—what hairbreadth escapes he had had —what disguises he had worn, and how shrewdly he had carried all of them so as to deceive the sharp eyes of the thousands of men and women who were ever on the watch for one of the banned priesthood! What Father Mahony said was true—the price put on the head of a priest was exactly the same as was put on the head of a wolf, and the island, north as well as south, contained hundreds of wretches calling themselves Irishmen who were quite as ready to hunt the one as the other.

He had escaped, but the life which he had led had left its mark upon him. His eyes had more of the look of a hunted animal than when I had seen them last ; they glanced suspiciously to right and left at times, and he wore a short ill-trimmed beard whose fringes indifferently concealed his thin lips. He wore the dress of a tradesman, and his hose were ripped and his shoes broken. But, looking at him now that the light was upon his face, I wondered how it was possible for any one to fail to see that he was a priest. How he could disguise

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himself so as to deceive thousands of his enemies seemed remarkable. How, for instance, could any one mistake him for a common boatman of the mouth of the Boyne? And yet he said that he had passed himself off as such under the eyes of Cromwell's men and the very mariners who, doubtless, hung over the ship's side, watching the approach of the boats with the prisoners seated on the thwarts.

Only one qualification did he seem to me to possess for the life which he lived, and that was in respect of his voice. Born in Ireland of a noble Irish family, he had lived in France and Spain during his earlier years, consequently he had nothing of the brogue of the Southern Irishman or of the harsh broad mongrel tongue of the Ulster plantation. He spoke English with no accent, but he could imitate, with extraordinary exactness, the speech of every class of person, both in England and Ireland. He could even simulate the accent of the Scotsman of the Lowlands with sufficient accuracy to deceive an Irishman, though I learnt by chance that when he once made an attempt to take in a Scotsman he failed utterly. But Frenchmen, as well as Spaniards, have told me that he spoke their respective languages with the careless ease of a native. Most Englishmen speak French with such laborious accuracy that any native of France can perceive in a moment they are foreigners.

When the sun had risen he repeated his matins very devoutly, treating me as though I did not exist, which ever was his attitude with regard to me so far as his religious exercises were concerned, for he never made the least attempt to lead us into his way of thinking on such matters. When he had completed his devotions, however, he turned to me, saying, "I wonder how it came that you were walking on the Moher Cliffs so long past midnight,

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son Walter. 'Twas sure unusual for you to come hither at such an hour."

"I had gone to my room in the tower, but I had no feeling for sleep," I told him. "And when my thoughts were going to the fate of my brother, some strange things happened."

"Some strange things? And did you interpret them so as to force you to walk hither?"

I told him of the sudden disquieting whirl of the sea bird through my lattice out of the mist, and of the effect which its coming had upon me, and then of that apparition which had set me wondering in the darkness; but I soon found that one should never recount in clear sunlight the story of an apparition seen through the darkness of the night. I felt that I lacked all the art of the teller of a ghost story. I failed to describe accurately anything of the mysterious impression made upon me by the act of seeing before me my own face.

But my companion did not even smile when I made an occasional pause, surprised at my own clumsiness in narration. On the contrary, he was very grave.

"The signs through which heaven speaks to men in these days are as numerous as they were in the old days when there were still some godly Jews," he said. "The Divine voice is to be heard now by such as choose to hearken to it, as clearly as it was heard by the prophets. They were but the interpreters of the marvels of nature, and it is granted to us by Heaven to draw our inspiration from the same source, if only we open our hearts to receive its messages. It is plain, my son, that you have been sent a message, the import of which 'twere stiff-necked to reject. Had you no thought that that bird which sought you out through the gloom of the night might be a sign to you that one who was out

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in the gloom of sky and sea was thinking of you—that as the bird was imprisoned for a brief space before it regained its liberty, so he who was thinking of you, even as you were of him, might only have been imprisoned for a time, making a dash for freedom with success ? "

" Heaven send that the bird be a faithful prophet," I cried. " Ah, Father, your words are full of comfort to me. But the other—that marvel of a man seeing in the darkness his own features—his own eyes looking at his own eyes—hath that great wonder got a meaning also ? "

" It needeth not to be interpreted by me," replied the priest. " Son Walter, hast thou ever looked into a glass to see what manner of man thou art ? "

" But no mirror is in my room, sir ; so it could not have been that I was deceived. Besides, the expression on the face that came before me was widely different from the affrighted one that my face wore at the time."

" True, true ! Nay, son, I am not so foolish as to suggest that you were deceived. Nay ; but had you not thought that the hour had come for you to look from your own face into your own heart, so that you might come to know yourself—to learn what your true motives are in setting yourself to lead a life so different from that which others about you are leading ? Sir, it hath reached my ears that you made a voyage across the Atlantic in the hope that you might be able to found a Church of your own in that new country. Well, is not the time come for you to search out the true motive which you had for faring forth from your father's house, from your native land, just when she standeth in sorest need of every true son that hath been born to her ? "

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I fancy that I hung my head when the shrewd Father put his question to me, his searching eyes being fixed upon my face. I could sympathize with the servants about the Castle, of whom, in good Irish fashion, there were nigh a score, when they complained to me that Father Mahony was a most difficult man to tell a lie to.

"Father," said I, after an incriminating pause. "Father, it scarce matters what my most dominant motive may have been. I can say in all truth that for a year after hearing George Fox preach I felt that at last I had heard the best truth that had ever reached the ear of man, and I sincerely hoped that I might be allowed to become a pioneer of the faith among the people who had founded a colony on the other side of the Atlantic, when they had been driven forth from their home for the faith which they held."

"And you learned from experience that folk who have been loudest in their protests against persecution on matters of faith become themselves the most ardent persecutors when the chance is offered to them? They would have none of your pioneering at the town they have named Boston, nor at the village they call Salem, though it might be fancied that the doctrine of peace, which, I am told, is the leading tenet of the faith according to Fox, would be received with favour at any place called Salem."

"I was disappointed in the Colonists, sir. They are a good people, stern in their exercise of religion and in their morality, but they are more intolerant than the Presbyterians in the plantation of Ulster."

"And it is this very spirit which will make them a great nation one day. Toleration is the first step to unbelief. Toleration implies lukewarmness, and nothing is ever done in the world by the lukewarm. It is the fiery zeal of the Church of Rome that will

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burn up all her adversaries—all the adversaries to the Truth, and make her the one Church of the World, which Heaven designed her to be. But we have strayed far from the interpretation of your vision. Son, that vision was sent to you as a sign that the time has come for you to look straight into your own heart in order that you shall learn all that is therein—whether it was zeal for the faith of Fox or—or—some other impulse that sent you across the Atlantic."

"Father, I have already told you——"

"You have told me something, but not all."

"All? all? What further could I have told you?"

"Boy, have you known me so indifferently as to think that I have failed to learn in the course of my sojourn in many parts of the world that the strongest of a boy's impulses is love?"

"Love? Ah, you forget that you are speaking to Walter, not Harry, my dear Father."

"Sir, Harry Fawcett hath surely not the monopoly of affection in the family of Fawcett, though I admit that he hath hitherto been the most urgent and the most successful lover in the family."

"He is worthy of all——"

"Son Walter, was it love of the Truth or love of Kathleen O'Brian that drove you from home?" cried the priest.

I hung my head. He gave a laugh saying—

"I am answered. Let us go the Castle."

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CHAPTER VI

NOT a single word did I exchange with Father Mahony while we were descending by the little sheep track to the Castle.

The fact was that I was too much astonished by his revelation of what I knew to be the truth, and what I believed to be a secret, that I was unable to speak. Even if Father Mahony had been a much easier person to lie to than the retainers of Castle Omeragh had found him to be—many of them by experience—I would still have been incapable of denying the charge which he had brought against me. It was part of his skill to fence with a person in a light way, that might also be called playful, and then suddenly to make a lunge, so to speak, that quite disarmed one, and made one look both foolish and feeble.

It was indeed the truth that I had been the first to love Kathleen O'Brian. That was nearly three years ago, when I was twenty years of age, and had just returned from Trinity College in Dublin, where I had been studying law. I had for some time a notion that she did not look on me without favour, but at times doubts would come to me and I remained sunk in the depths of despair. Thus it was that I feared more and more every time that I was in her company to tell her what was in my heart, and to ask her if she would give me that priceless gift of her love.

It was not that I shrunk from hearing her bid

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me to begone from her presence, as I had read of haughty young women doing out of scorn for the presumptuous swain who had drawn nigh to them with tales of love. No, I say that it was because I knew well that Kathleen was of a nature so gentle that to be compelled to reject my suit would cause her to feel miserable for the pain she was giving me, that I kept silent when by her side, though many opportunities were given me by good luck, when I might have told her my secret. O'Brian's Tower was only eight miles from Castle Omeragh, and albeit that the O'Brians were one of the old Irish families who had bought some of the estates of the great Earl of Desmond, and had settled in Clare, there had never been aught but friendliness between us. Indeed, O'Brian was wont to declare that the Fawcetts were truer Irishmen than the O'Brians had ever been.

And then Harry appeared one day at the Castle, and the first day that I saw him in the company of Kathleen O'Brian, I knew that my chance of being accepted by her had vanished for ever.

My brother had been in the King's Army for a year or two, and had become so great a favourite that he was entrusted with the duty of escorting Queen Henrietta Maria back to her native France, when it became plain that, for at least a space, the King's cause was a lost one. He had remained at the French Court until the King's enemies had had their final triumph, and then one day he suddenly appeared at Castle Omeragh.

He had not seen Kathleen since we had been children together, and I must confess that I had my misgivings the first day we rode down the glen to O'Brian's Tower. Thankful to heaven though I was for the favour shown me in granting that I should be the brother of such a splendid prince

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among men, I was ill at ease as I mounted my pony by his side. I think somehow that the simple relations of a splendid prince among men have occasionally uneasy minds. I had heard more than once what perilous favours brother Harry had received from beautiful hands at the Court of Whitehall, as well as at that of the Louvre, and I wished with all my heart that I had made sure of Kathleen before he returned to Ireland.

But then, I thought, what folly it was to have such a wish in my heart. If Kathleen did not love me, there was no way by which I could have made sure of her; but if she did love me—the thought was a wild one—then, indeed, I would be sure of her, whether or not my splendid brother was by her side.

It so happened, however, that a slight accident took place when Harry had mounted his pony, which made me feel less hopeless. The spirited little animal was not accustomed to be ridden with so light a rein as Harry gave him, and he made a sudden swerve, which would have unhorsed a less certain rider. Harry kept his seat, but there flew from the breast of his riding jacket what seemed to me to be a small medal—I feared, being a good Protestant, that the thing was a scapular; but when I picked it up from the ground, I perceived with great satisfaction (not alone to my Protestantism) that it was a gold rim enclosing an exquisite portrait of a lovely young girl.

I handed it up to my brother with a smile. There was a slight flush on his cheek as he quickly took it—indeed, he almost snatched it from my hand, saying—

"'Twas careless of me to forget to fasten the riband to a button. What a bit of a temper the pony has!"

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He put the fiery little creature to a gallop, and I followed more leisurely. I felt very pleased, for I was sure that Harry would never be at pains to carry that portrait in his bosom if the original of the picture did not occupy a place still nearer to his heart.

When we were riding side by side he turned to me, after a rather long period of silence, saying—

"'Twere vain to make the attempt to conceal from you a secret that an accident hath revealed, old Watty. You saw the picture that I carry ever close to my heart?"

"Faith, sir," said I, "you have a fine taste in pictures if that is a good specimen of your gallery."

"She is the loveliest creature that ever turned a commonplace world into a Paradise fit for the gods," said he. "Sir, that is the portrait of Mademoiselle Lucie de Vaux, the daughter of the Marquis de Vaux, and she is accounted the greatest beauty at the Court of the Louvre. If any man in my rank of life denies that simple fact I shall serve him as I served Monsieur le Baron Champin, who was presumptuous enough to question it."

"I will not run the chance of being cut off in my youth by doubting the wisdom of your choice, brother," said I.

"Ah, wisdom—wisdom—h'm, I'm not so confident on the wisdom side of the affair," said he. "Somehow wisdom in *affaires de coeur* seems to be associated only with a girl with a plain face. No, brother, I dare not think that either Lucie or myself could be accounted wise. That was why the Marquise used her influence with the Cardinal, and packed me off to Ireland, or anywhere else that I might have a fancy to go, so long as 'twas far enough from Mademoiselle. But the unhappy exile makes no difference to us. Lucie wears my por-

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trait next to her heart day and night, and I—well, you have been a witness of my carelessness. Ah, Watty, we men are careless triflers. The best of us is unworthy of the smallest favour from such a peerless creature as my Lucie."

"That is true, I doubt not," said I. "But surely Lucie was not the name of the lady about whom you wrote to me eight or nine months ago —the one for whom you asked me for a sonnet?"

"Did I ask you for a sonnet? Parbleu! but you have a memory! Why, that affair came to a head before I had been a month in France. Hélas! It was my poor little Adrienne, the sweetest——"

"Nay, Adrienne was not the name."

"Adrienne—'twas Adrienne. I remember the affair with suitable exactness. Ciel! allow me, my good brother, to assure you that, however indelicately forgetful some men may be, I am not so. I tell you, sir, that 'twas Adrienne, who——"

"Josephine—the name was Josephine."

"Oh, did you write a sonnet for little Josephine? I had thought that it was for Adrienne. How time doth fly! You are sure it was Josephine?"

"Quite sure. She had hair—hair—let me think, 'qu' attrappe les rayons de la lune, comme l'une qui——'"

"Brother, once again you are right. The little Josephine was an arch rascal. How could I confuse her in my memory with so sweet a child as Amalie——"

"Amalie? You never mentioned Amalie. 'Twas of Adrienne——"

"Of course, 'twas of Adrienne we were talking. Amalie was pretty, but she never had the grand air of Adrienne."

I burst out a-laughing, for the truth began to

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dawn upon me that my brother Harry had a good deal of the temperament of the butterfly in his nature, and clearly his sojourn in the Queen's *entourage* at the French Court had been to him as a butterfly's visit to a *parterre* of the choicest flowers that grew in a garden.

I felt a good deal happier now than I had on setting out to pay our visit to O'Brian's Tower. A butterfly that hath accustomed itself to the varied charms of a garden of delicate growths would scarcely run a chance of being captivated by a little wayside flower.

Alas! how little I knew of the temperament of the gay insect! Before Harry had been in the company of Kathleen for a quarter of an hour I could see that she absorbed all his attention, and before another quarter had slipped by I could perceive that he was making love to her.

As for Kathleen, it seemed to me that at first she was inclined to treat him coldly, and indeed during this first visit that we paid together to O'Brian's Tower she was unusually reserved. But if she had had the advantage of an education among butterflies of the French Court, she could not have played a rôle better calculated to lead my brother on in his infatuation for her.

We had scarcely got out of sight of the Tower on our way homeward before he was raving about her.

"Ciel!" he cried, "how is it that you failed to tell me in any of your letters that so divine a creature was to be found in this desolate region? Why, you must be as cold as—as she herself seemed to be—only *seemed*, mind you, only *seemed*. I looked into her eyes. Ah, they afforded me a glimpse into the furnace that glows behind them—a banked-up furnace of feeling. I have seen the

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furnaces at the Tuileries, where they bake the tiles, near Paris. When the fires are banked-up you fancy that all is black and dead; but here and there, if you wait, you will see a glow that tells you what is going on below the surface. Oh, such eyes! And you never told me about her. Pardieu! brother, you should change your religion, and become a monk—you have the monk's temperament. Such eyes!"

"Are they as brilliant as the eyes of Mademoiselle de Vaux?" I inquired dryly.

He gave a little uneasy laugh.

"La pauvre petite Lucie!" he murmured. "Ah, Lucie was altogether charming—yes, in her own way. But Kathleen! 'Slife, brother, there is none to approach her at the French Court. If she were to show herself there for a day, the men would all be slicing each other's throats to gain her favour! Brave men have died for the little Lucie, and yet she was only—nay, I will not deny that she was of exquisite beauty. Ah, you must believe in portents, brother—you saw how the picture was flung to the ground when I was in the act of setting out for the Tower—setting out on a short journey, 'tis true, but one that is destined to have the most important results so far as I am concerned. Walter, you must believe in portents. Why should that picture have flung itself on the ground at that moment?"

"You treated the pony as you would a Barbary horse, that was why——"

"You are without imagination, though you have written passable verses. I tell you, sir, that such things—apparently accidents—startle even the most careless of men now and again. I tell you they make one think seriously of life and death, and the destiny of man, and suchlike matters.

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Cold ! no one shall tell me that a girl with such eyes is cold."

So he went on, and I could only sit on my pony and listen to him. All that I feared had come to pass. My only comforting reflection was derived from my brother's simile of the furnace. The more fiercely a furnace flames, the sooner it burns itself out. I had hopes that Harry's ardour would soon exhaust itself.

For some time during our second visit to O'Brian's Tower Kathleen remained by me. She even took me out alone to show me how the shrubs, which by my advice she had planted where there was some good soil, were growing, leaving Harry engaged in a half-hearted way in describing the young Princes Charles and James to her father.

She was more encouraging to me this day than I had ever felt her to be before, and I know now that if I had put my fate to the touch and told her all that was in my heart, I should have been successful. Once, indeed, when our hands met by a sweet accident while we were tying up a shrub that had been blown about by the wind, I was at the point of confessing what was in my heart, and of asking her to give me a word of hope ; but the thought suddenly came to me that were I to do so at that time, I should be acting dishonourably toward my brother, whom I had brought to the Tower, allowing him to assume that I was heart-whole so far as Kathleen was concerned, and that I had no intention of asking her for her love—this thought, I say, came to me, and I talked to Kathleen of such trivial matters as the trial of the King and the feebleness of the character of the English people. I confess that I noticed an impatient flush on her face, and that flush was reflected, if I may be allowed the expression, in her voice, when she said—

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"Oh, yes, the English are poor things; but for one who takes years to make up his mind on a matter that to any one else would be as clear as the water in Lough Iar, and who doth not know his own mind when he hath made it up, commend me to an Irishman. I suppose you will come within the Tower when you have tied up your lame shrubs."

I scarce knew what interpretation to put upon her words or her manner of speech on this day when I fancied she had spoken to me in such a way as tended to give me good hope. So sudden and complete a change as had taken place in her manner altogether startled me, and for a while I reflected upon what I believed to be my good fortune in having refrained from confessing my love to her at a time when (as I thought) I should have been repulsed by scorn. That was how I reflected—yes, for a while.

When I crept back to the hall I found Kathleen listening with glowing eyes to all my brother was saying regarding the graciousness of the Queen, declaring that if any evil were to befall her son, she would not survive him. Neither of them seemed to notice that I had returned.

Within five minutes he had come to be on a much more familiar footing with her than I had reached after my year of devotion.

I remained at home for two months, waiting to mark the waning of his passion. That was what I hoped for in that spirit of selfishness which ever seems to be the token of true love. But one morning I woke to perceive what an unworthy part I was playing. There was the girl whose happiness I professed to myself to have nearest to my heart—there she was loving my brother, and here was I looking forward with selfish interest to the day

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when the great unhappiness would fall upon her of learning that she was beloved by him no longer. I felt that this was not the part that a true man should play, so I took myself off to England. There I came under the influence of the preaching of that remarkable man, George Fox, who had just founded his Society of Friends of the Truth; and being, I suppose, in a condition of soul to welcome a new religion, I became one of his most ardent followers. It was when my zeal was at its highest that I took a passage in a ship bound for Boston in America, where I hoped to forget my disappointment in the work of making the colonists converts to the principles taught by George Fox. Alas! I found that the colonists were so well satisfied with their religion they would have nothing to say to a new one.

They did not at any rate have much to say to the new preacher. They sent him in the custody of a constable aboard a vessel bound for an English port, making him understand that if ever he showed his face in Boston town he might not get off again so easily.

I began to feel, when I was well out to sea, and without any great desire to return to that stiff-necked colony, that I was not made of the stuff that goes to make the pioneer of a new faith among a hard people with strong opinions of their own.

I returned to Castle Omeragh, and found that my brother had gone to help in the defence of the town of Drogheda the very day that the news arrived of the setting out of Cromwell's expedition to subdue the Irish.

I had got no letter from him or from my father all the time that I was away, so I had no chance of learning how Harry's suit was progressing. But I could not help wondering whether my brother had taken up his sword because of the waning of

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his affection, or by reason of his desire to do some deeds that should make him worthier of the love of his lady.

At the Castle all our retainers were full of words of admiration for "the young Master"—they had been used to call me by that title in the old days—his daring on horseback and his skill in every form of sport. Of course, if I had pressed them, they would have told me plenty regarding his love suit—much more than I would have believed. I could not, however, bring myself to ask them anything on this subject; and before I had been at home for a month there came to us the dreadful news of the fall of Drogheda, and the horrible massacre of the people.

For a fortnight we were left in suspense as to the fate of my brother; then came Captain Purdon to tell us what had happened, and now I had just had a further chapter added to the terrible story by Father Mahony, by whose side I was now walking across the causeway of stones between the seaward slope of Glen Omeragh and the Castle.

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CHAPTER VII

NO word was exchanged between the priest and myself until we were close to the Castle gate. Father Mahony had said long ago all that he meant to say to me, and I had it impressed upon me during the previous half hour that it would really be useless for me to make the attempt to justify to such a man any step that I had taken. He seemed to know everything that had happened directly concerning us, even down to the secret of my life, which I could not believe that any one suspected.

In addition, he seemed to have a circumstantial knowledge of my reception in Amercia, and of my return to Ireland; and his last remark had shown that the most powerful motive that I had for undertaking the duties of the pioneer of the new teaching among the American colonists—a dreadfully stiff-necked people—was not hid from him.

What use was there trying to convince such a man that there might be a flaw in his deductions? None. Even if there was a flaw in his deductions, and I could not say that there was, it would have been impossible to bring it home to him.

Therefore we walked in silence, until, as I have said, near the Castle, when he turned to me, saying,

"When doth Captain Purdon part company with you?"

I replied that I thought it possible that he might remain for a day or two. He was quite broken

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down by reason of his long journey, and my father would not let him leave the Castle until he had in some measure recovered his health.

"I think that he is to be trusted—yes, up to a certain point, this Captain Purdon," said the priest. "To be sure he did not hesitate to take up arms on the side of the enemies of his country. None of your family would do that, Walter. Your father's patriotism is greater than his Protestantism."

"My father is on the side of the King," said I. "He was entrusted by the King with this Castle to have and hold for him and his heirs, and he will be true to his trust."

"Thank heaven there are still thousands of Irishmen who are Protestants, and who are equally faithful to King Charles the Second," said he. "Drogheda was defended by hundreds of Englishmen. Wexford, Waterford, Clonmel—their garrisons are Ulstermen and some are Protestants. They are the true patriots, who are ready to link their future with their Catholic brethren, knowing that Ireland's future must be the first consideration of Ireland's sons. But Captain Purdon—well, he has come to know in time what would be meant by Ireland under Cromwell. Still, he will never draw his sword against the Roundheads. We must reckon him among the neutrals."

"He came far out of his way to tell us of Harry's fate," said I. "We had but an indifferent acquaintance with him before, and he was under no obligation to come to us instead of going to his own castle on Lough Dearg."

"That is true," said Father Mahony. "I wish he were safe within the walls of his own tower."

My father met us at the Castle gate. He stared at us, and when I caught a glimpse of myself in a

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mirror that hung on the wall of the passage to the hall, I did not wonder that he had stared. My hair had not come unscathed out of the conflict with the wind and the damp mist of the night, and my face was somewhat wild in its aspect, as must be the face of most men who have been up and out of bed all night. And if I was indifferent neat, be sure that my companion was much worse. The truth was that he had not slept in a bed for many nights. He had done his journeyings mainly in the dead of night, hiding and sleeping only when he could do so in perfect security during the daytime.

My father was, of course, amazed at the sight of the priest, and I am not altogether confident that he was pleased at the sight, though he made him welcome with a readiness that was not lacking in warmth.

"He has seen Harry," I whispered to my father, and that was enough to cause the warmth of his reception of our visitor to be doubled.

"The boy will look after himself, eh, Father Mahony?" said he with a confidential nod and a wave of the hand that was meant to express entire absence of misgiving on his part, though with the recollection I had of seeing the light come from my brother's room in the tower, the action did not convince me that his mind was wholly at rest. "Oh, yes, Master Harry is the boy that will fall on his feet whatever happens, he continued. "What do you say, Father?"

"By the goodness of God he will live to triumph over our enemies," said the priest. "Sir Gilbert Fawcett, I bear to you his parting message. He was in the boat that was carrying him and some of his companions out to the vessel which was anchored in the tideway of the Boyne. He bade

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me tell you to have no fear for him, but to rest sure that he would get the better of the wretches into whose hands he had fallen."

"What did I tell you?" cried my father in an air of triumph, but with tears in his eyes. "Did not I say from the first that the lad would be able to give a good account of himself? 'Slife, sir, is there any one who will venture to say that the day has come when bravery, linked to an ingenious mind, must yield to such commonplace brutality as the Roundheads have at their command? If that doctrine is to prevail, then, say I, let the grey wolf increase in Ireland, and let the hunters give up the chase. I tell you that my son, if he be not a free man to-day, will be a free man to-morrow; but if the morrow pass leaving his hands bound still in irons, the day after shall witness his deliverance. But why stand I here preaching to starving men? 'Slife, Watty, thou lookest as if thou hadst been among the wolves for a week, and having most of the travail of the chase laid upon thee. Good Father Mahony, you are welcome—even did you not bring me good news you would still be welcome. We are not so hard pressed but that we can find a breakfast for a stranger now and again."

I had changed my garments and run a comb through my hair some time before Father Mahony reappeared, and so I had an opportunity of giving an account to Captain Purdon of my finding of the priest on the summit of the cliffs, and of the message which he brought to us from Harry. Albeit that recent occurrences in England, such as the imprisonment and the unlawful slaying of the King, did not tend to give force to my father's contention that bravery and ingenuity were not to be overcome by the vulgar qualities of the Roundheads, I did not hesitate to express the hope which I had of my

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brother's deliverance out of the hands of our oppressors.

Purdon gravely acquiesced in all that I said. He did not do so vaguely either; but, setting out with great clearness the difficulties which Harry would have to overcome before he could hope to regain his freedom, explained how it might be possible for him to succeed in spite of all obstacles. Of course my brother would have to contend with the vigilance of the men who were guarding the prisoners, he said; but he went on to say that his experience as a soldier was that, however vigilant a guard might be at first, it eventually waned with time, and owing to the monotony of recurring incidents. Only by the constant exertion of officers was a guard prevented from falling into habits of such carelessness as could scarcely be believed possible by persons who had no experience of dealing with men in masses. It was this disposition to relax that was taken advantage of in the thousands of cases of notable gaol-breakings and rebellions with which history teemed. Yes, he believed in all sincerity that, with a reasonable amount of luck on his side, Harry might succeed in freeing himself shortly—perhaps even within a year.

"A year!" I cried. "What, do you fancy that he will submit to work a slave's labour for a whole year?"

Only by a miracle could he hope to make any move toward gaining his liberty within a year," replied Purdon. "A year is a short time, young sir."

I laughed.

"I have a notion that 'twill seem a long time to my brother Harry," said I. "I believe that he will make an attempt to free himself before the ship gets clear of the Moyle."

"They will hang him from the yard-arm," said Purdon.

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"Ay, sir, if he fail. But if he succeed 'twill be his enemies who will perforce occupy that position, only there are not sufficient yard-arms to accommodate so large a ship's company."

"I wish him success," said the officer in a tone that suggested very strongly his belief that my brother would be hanged.

And then he went on to speak of Father Mahony. He wondered if my father thought it was discreet to harbour such a man—one who was looked upon by many Irish families, as well as by the Parliamentarians, as a firebrand in the country. It would go hard with my father and his household if the priest were captured on our land, he said.

I replied that I was sure that my father regarded it indiscreet to have any traffic whatever with the priest; but added, that as our house had already taken such action as entitled us all to be hanged over and over again, I did not think that the harbouring of a priest or two would matter a great deal now.

"Our chief care now should be to keep ourselves as far apart as possible from Cromwell's army," I continued. "Therein will lie our best chance of escaping hanging. And I think that with a little care we should be able to avoid attracting their attention. Do you think it likely, sir, that any of Cromwell's men will find their way to so remote a part of the country as this?"

"Master Walter," he replied after a thoughtful pause, "I have been in the counsels of the Parliamentary army, and, therefore, albeit that I do not hold with the methods of their leaders, I do not think that I should be acting honourably were I to betray these counsels to any one."

"I ask your pardon, sir," said I. "Indeed 'twas not my desire to obtain from you any knowledge of

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the intentions of the army of Cromwell. I was only seeking to obtain your agreement with my notion that our remoteness is the best security we could have for not being molested."

"You have not yet come to understand the character of Oliver Cromwell, or you would know that when he believes it necessary to achieve a certain purpose, he casts to the winds all such difficulties as would occur to most men. Take my word for it, sir, if he thought that it would have a good effect upon this part of Ireland to demolish half-a-dozen castles in the county of Clare, he would not allow the question of their remoteness to baulk him."

"May be not, sir; but it seems to me that the strength of these same castles might have that effect. Castle Omeragh, for instance, Captain Purdon, might tend to make Oliver Cromwell aware of the fact that he has not at his command the rams' horns before which the walls of Jericho fell flat."

"Believe me, Master Walter, the man who was able, in the teeth of the English nation and contrary to the will and judgment of the major portion of the English people, to depose and execute the rightful monarch, will not make a great ado over the razing of a tower or two in the wildest part of his late Majesty's kingdom."

"I am certain my father will value the hint you give of what might happen, Captain Purdon."

"'Tis only a hint—remember that. I have no ground for saying that you should expect to hear the rumble of Cromwell's cannons through Glen Omeragh; I only say that—that—well, that 'tis dangerous in these times to harbour any priest, but when that priest is notorious as a Jesuit and a firebrand of his faith, for a Protestant household to harbour such an one is, I say, something more than unwise. Be advised, sir, and rid yourself of him."

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"Captain Purdon," said I, "Father Mahony put his life in the most serious peril only to speak a word to my brother, and to place in his hands an instrument that may procure his release from slavery."

"I am answered," said Purdon. "He has placed you in his debt; but I trust that I shall not give offence if I ask to be excused from sitting at the same table as this Father Mahony."

"I am certain that my father will not take offence at a show of prudence on the part of a guest, which he himself doth not possess," said I, hastening to the door to prevent the priest from entering the dining-hall.

But before I got the length of the door my father entered alone. I made a motion to him, and took a step outside, waiting for Father Mahony to come down the stairway. My father's face wore an expression of surprise.

"What i' the world is the matter with the gossoon?" he said. "Why tarry you there, sirrah, as if you expected some one to join our party while we break our fast? Is not our table complete, or have you asked any one to sit down with us? Come hither, son Walter, and prithee let's have no more of these phantasms. 'Slife, Captain Purdon, what between the making of sonnets one year and the starting of a new religion the next, a simple father is forced to keep at least one eye upon a son that is given to such surprises. For the lord's sake, Walter, blow upon the horn, so that the pasty be served."

Not for some moments did I collect my senses sufficiently to enable me to perceive that my father had, with his usual appreciation of what was right, determined that the priest should not appear so long as Captain Purdon was in the Castle. My father very properly felt that if he chose to risk his

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own neck by harbouring a priest, that was no reason why he should implicate a stranger in a transaction that concerned himself alone. If Captain Purdon were known to have sat down at the same table as Father Mahony, he would by the act render himself liable to the penalty which, according to law, attached to the harbouring of a priest.

Captain Purdon looked greatly relieved when my father had spoken, and I must confess that I blew a fierce blast upon the table horn, which had, since the days of the earliest Desmond, taken the place of a bell to summon the servitors.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE unsettled condition of Ireland is due to the various settlements of the country. This may be an Hibernian way of putting the matter; but I am sure it is the true way of putting it. From the days of the Danish occupation of the island down to the present hour, the only cure devised—in the friendliest spirit—by Ireland's enemies, for the unrest of the Irish people, has been a resettlement of some part of the island. A very good example of the effects of these unsettling settlements was to be seen in the condition of things at Castle Omeragh on the day of which I write. The occupier of the Castle was the descendant of an Englishman who had been granted a portion of the estates of the Irish Earl of Desmond, in the same year that the poet Edmund Spencer, Sir Walter Raleigh, and a number of other Undertakers had crossed the Channel. One of his guests was the descendant of an Ulster colonist, and the second belonged to an ancient Irish house—"the real old stock," or the original holders of the land; he was, moreover, a representative of the old religion of the country.

Now, of these three persons, the first refused to acknowledge the authority of the English Parliament to invade Ireland, the second admitted this authority and had fought to maintain it, and the third was an exile, so to speak, in the land of his forefathers; he—the only one of the three who possessed a just claim to the land—was an outlaw.

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Any one might slay him without being called to account for the crime—nay, his murderer could claim a reward for his deed—and any one giving him shelter or sustenance was liable to be hanged, after undergoing the merest form of trial.

But Sir Gilbert Fawcett, an excellent Protestant, was glad to have an opportunity of sheltering the priest, though Captain Purdon, another Protestant, would not sit down to table with him, and was altogether in agreement with the tolerant declaration made by Cromwell before embarking for Ireland, to the effect that every one in Ireland would be free to hold to any form of religion that was agreeable to his conscience, but if he was a Papist he was to be killed without mercy.

Cromwell's expedition to Ireland had for its object the promulgation of the principle of religious tolerance by an universal massacre of Papists.

But, in describing the differences of opinion prevailing under one roof, I might have said a word about myself, only I do not want to introduce any confusing complications. As a matter of fact, however, it is necessary to state that I was a member of George Fox's Society of Friends of Truth, and, as such, I held war in abhorrence. I fear that since I had become a convert to this faith I was looked on with some measure of contempt in the community of fighters in the midst of which I lived.

My father only smiled at what he called my whimsies, and said that I would get rid of them pretty speedily when I found myself facing a mob of Cromwellians, with a sprig of blackthorn in my fist. I may mention that a sprig is the Clare word for a huge but very handy cudgel, usually cut from a bush of blackthorn, which grows very freely in many parts of Ireland, and is said to possess certain qualities, inclining to the offensive rather than to

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the defensive, which have won for it a warm place in the affection of the mere Irish.

But I could see that, good-humouredly though my father took my acceptance of the earliest of George Fox's principles, I was looked on with a sort of galling pity by our neighbours, and by the Castle retainers—all who had had the courage to keep away from the war, for there were still some men about us who agreed with my father in thinking that should things come to the worst in Ireland, that is to say, should Cromwell and his men overrun the whole country, it might save a good deal of discussion when a fresh experiment at extermination and resettlement came to be made, if we could show that we had taken no part in the war.

It was by such people as these—people who had war in their hearts, but no arms in their hands—that I was looked on with contempt, and at first I felt this attitude to be galling. But after I had, in a moment of anger, kicked downstairs, and from the lowest lobby into the scullery, and thence into the regions of the pig-styes, which were a long way from the Castle—fully ten yards—a servitor who made a rashly rude remark when I reproved him for some gross breach of duty, I felt a good deal better, as if an emollient had been applied where the contempt had galled me.

Of course the reflection that I felt better for having so neglected my principles as an adherent of peace, caused me some anxiety for a while; but I may say that I did not find it necessary to send a message to George Fox asking for his counsel on the matter.

The only person who freely gave me his sympathy on my return from America was Robert Kennedy of Killibrack, a gentleman who bred the finest horses in the County Clare. He was a man of

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probably a year or two over thirty years of age, and he had come to Killibrack from the County Meath, he said. He was, moreover, a good Protestant. A good Protestant in those days was a man who was always afraid of being taken for a Roman Catholic. It was probably because he was so good a Protestant that there were some people who said that he was a Roman Catholic, and that his real name was Kenney, not Kennedy. My father was used to laugh when people hinted at this, and to affirm that Kennedy had got the better of them over a horse. It seemed as if he had got the better of a good many people over horses; but nobody thought the worse of him on that account, for whatever my father may have pretended to think, he knew perfectly well that if people in County Clare quarrelled with those who had tried to get the better of them in selling a horse, few of the inhabitants would remain on speaking terms.

But, though I had not been especially friendly with Kennedy in the old days, yet, meeting him one day shortly after the departure of Captain Purdon, he showed himself to be so friendly and so sympathetic that I quite warmed to him, and felt that he was a broader-minded man than I had thought him to be, or than people whom I had heard speak of him had thought him to be.

He said a phrase or two of welcome to me—not without a respectful word—on my safe return from the American colonies, and then he went on to offer his sympathy for the sad fate of my brother.

"Of course, you have had no chance of hearing much about him, Master Walter," he went on to say. "Some one did tell me, I mind not where, that you heard of his cruel mishap from one who had escaped from Drogheda."

"'Twas Captain Purdon, late of Clotworthy's

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regiment, who brought us the news," I replied. "But he only caught a glimpse of Harry among the other prisoners."

"And what might Purdon be doing in this neighbourhood?" he asked. "Hath Clotworthy's regiment been disbanded?"

"Captain Purdon was so shocked at the scenes of horrible massacre which he was forced to witness, that he left his regiment. He was granted a pass by Cromwell himself."

He looked surprised.

"Now, why should General Cromwell suffer an officer to forsake his regiment in such a fashion?" said he.

"That I know not, unless it be that even Cromwell himself was horrified by the massacre, and could not for shame refuse the request of Captain Purdon," I suggested.

He looked at me for a moment, and then a very broad smile crept across his face—it might almost be termed a grin.

"May be that," he said. "Ay, old Noll may have been shocked at the bloodshed, though people who know him have never, in talking to me about him, laid particular stress upon his soft-heartedness. And the Captain hath left Castle Omeragh, and gone to his home, I suppose?"

"He only remained two nights at the Castle," said I.

"So that you and Sir Gilbert are once again alone?" said he, glancing in a somewhat searching way into my face—only for an instant, however; before I could answer him he had begun to talk once more of Harry. What a misfortune it was that he had fallen into the hands of the enemy! Was there no hope that, after all, he might have got away from them before the chance arrived of putting

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him aboard the ship. Such things had happened before, he reminded me.

I shook my head.

"Alas!" said I, "we are bereft of such a hope. He was sent in fetters aboard a snow in Drogheda river."

"Who was it that told you that now?" he cried quickly.

I perceived that I had been a little too generous in my information to a mere acquaintance. I had no mind to advertise the fact that Father Mahony had come to the Castle, and that he was still there. I had forgotten for a moment that Kennedy was so good a Protestant; but I remembered it now.

"Ah, sir," said I, "do we need to be told by an eye-witness of what must have happened? Is't not enough for us to know that my brother has had sufficient time to be with us and yet that he is away to assure us of what his fate must have been?"

"True—alas! 'Tis but too true," he assented, shaking his head. "Poor lad! Poor lad! Oh, Master Walter, if 'twere not that I am a Protestant to the backbone, I would pray for the success of the Irish against that cold-hearted usurper. I am sure that 'tis you yourself that's ready enough to avenge your poor brother's misfortune, only that 'twould be against your principles as a follower of George Fox. 'Tis true enough, sir, that war is terribly un-Christian. The first time you have a spare hour, Mr. Walter, maybe you wouldn't think it too much of a bother to tell me some more of the principles of your Society. I feel that just now I need only the least bit of a push to send me head foremost into your creed. War, besides being un-Christian, has been the curse of Ireland for centuries, and though no power could make you or me Irish, Master

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Walter, we have both the welfare of the country at heart, I know."

"Sir," said I, "I am not ashamed of being an Irishman."

"But you're not one—there never was an Irish Fawcett, any more than an Irish Kennedy," he said.

"I know nothing about Kennedy, but I do about Fawcett," I said, "and I can assure you that we Fawcetts account ourselves as much Irish as if we were descended from the Desmond, and could add 'O' or 'Mac' to our name."

The man lifted up his hands in an attitude of surprise. The notion of any family that could claim English origin boasting of being Irish was astounding to him.

"'Tis Ireland that should be proud of you and the likes of you, not you proud of Ireland," said he. "By the powers, to hear you talk would well-nigh make me wish that I was Irish myself."

I refrained from telling him that if he were to claim to be an Irishman, his claim would be allowed, for I had met several men in a better position in life than he held, who, though unmistakably Irish, did their best to pass themselves off as English, and were ready to challenge any one who might hint at their real nationality. I am happy to think, however, that there were thousands of the descendants of the Protestant settlers who loved Ireland as fervently as did the descendants of the kings who had ruled the island and fought among themselves, like the true independent Sovereigns that they were.

He changed the conversation quite suddenly by telling me that he was on his way to O'Brian's Tower, and inquiring if I had lately seen O'Brian or Mistress Kathleen.

I told him that I had not had an opportunity since my return.

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Again he felt compelled to express his surprise. He had always understood, he said, that I was a great favourite with O'Brian of the Tower, and as for Mistress Kathleen—apparently words failed him to do justice to this topic; but I think that on the whole, he managed to express himself pretty accurately by means of one of his most knowing smiles, a tardily suppressed wink, and a motion of his riding whip in the direction of my ribs.

"O'Brian and my father have ever been the best of friends," said I, "and nothing has happened within my knowledge to interfere with the good feeling between our families."

"It wouldn't be myself that would hint aught like that, young sir," said he. "Oh, no, indeed; just the contrary. Being in the confidence of your poor brother, I doubt not that you know how he was drove to the war. Oh, the girls! 'Tis them that has a deal to answer for, so it is."

When Master Kennedy forgot himself he spoke his native English curiously like an Irishman.

"My brother did not need any driving to the war, let me tell you," I cried.

"Not he, I'm sure," said Kennedy fervently. "But, at the same time——" here he paused, pursed out his lips, and put his tongue in his cheek. "They tell me that he was the very divil among the wenches in France," he went on in a confidential whisper. "And, by the powers, if they're all as clean-built and as shapely young women as the one that made her appearance in these parts, with that brave lump of a brother by her side, just after Master Harry had set out for the war, I don't wonder that the post of Queen's escort was reckoned an attractive one. Well, well, boys will be boys. And so, good morning to you, Master Walter, and 'tis glad I am to see you back in the ould country with no harm come to

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you. I'm on my way to see if the MacDermott has any news of his son. I hear that Wicklow is the next town to be massacred, God help them."

We had reached the parting of the tracks on what was called the Ennis Road, though it was a poor sort of highway, and he gave his horse a touch of the spur, starting it into a gallop across the soft turf in the direction of the MacDermott's castle.

He left me completely bewildered by his parting words. What did he mean by suggesting that Kathleen had something to do with Harry's departure for the war? And then his reference to some French girl having suddenly appeared, a brother by her side, in these Irish wilds—what did he mean by that? I had heard of no such apparition, though doubtless if I had had an inclination to put even the humblest of the Castle retainers to an inquisition I would have heard enough to dispel some of the mystery that seemed to linger about this mysterious young woman and her brother.

I rode slowly back to Castle Omeragh and found O'Brian and his daughter Kathleen seated with my father and our perilous guest, Father Mahony, in the oaken hall.

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CHAPTER IX

I HAD not seen Kathleen O'Brian for more than a whole year, and the instant that I now found her standing before me, the melancholy truth was forced upon me that, in spite of my renunciation of her in favour of my brother—in spite of the severe discipline to which I had subjected myself, in spite of the consolation which comes to one with a change of religion, causing one's eyes to look to the future rather than to the past—in spite of all this, I loved her as strongly as I had ever loved her.

And, worse than all, this melancholy truth did not strike me as being at all melancholy. On the contrary, I felt a thrill of joy at the thought that I loved her still—that my love for her had suffered no change.

By her greeting of me she showed how dearly she loved my brother.

She could not speak while I held her hand, and I, too, was perforce silent. I could see that we were both thinking of the last day when we had been together, with Harry gazing at her with frank admiration in his eyes. It came quite naturally to him to admire a beautiful girl, and the frankness of his admiration was its most winning feature.

Alack ! Alack !

I felt for her with all my heart. I felt more than pity for that sweet creature whose lover had been snatched from her by a force more pitiless than

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death itself. If he had been brought dead to her feet the blow would have been a severe one; but in the case of death one knows the worst—it sometimes is the best—in a moment, whereas in so pitiful a case as that of my brother, the alternating hope and despair which take possession of one, set one's very soul upon the rack.

I knew just what was her feeling when my fingers touched her hand. I could feel that she was trembling; but no tear came to her eyes. The brave girl was mindful of how strong had been the affection between Harry and myself, and she would not allow herself the solace of tears lest she should increase the bitterness of my thoughts of him at that moment.

But O'Brian's greeting of me, when, without a word, I dropped his daughter's hand, had in it nothing of that subtlety of appreciation of my feelings which Kathleen had showed.

"Maeldune has returned from his voyages!" he cried, giving me so friendly a blow between the shoulders that I was sent staggering across the hall. (His allusion was to the chief in the old Irish poem known as "The Book of the Dun Cow.") "He has returned at the right moment, too, for if all that I can hear be true, we'll need every fighting man in the County Clare if we are to hold our own."

I shook my head.

"You forget, O'Brian," said I, "that I am a man of peace now. Any time that you can spare me an hour or two I think that I shall be able to convince you that all warfare is an abomination—inhuman and——"

"'Twill take you more than all the hours I'm likely to have to spare between now and Christmas to convince me that the business of the world will ever be carried on without fighting, friend Walter,"

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said he. "Of course, you're younger than I am, and so know more about the thing, but any one that holds that man wasn't born to fight is—well, I'll only say at this time that 'twill take a deal of argufying on his part, backed up by a pretty bout with a blackthorn, to make me perceive that he is in the right. Inhuman! Why, mo bouchaille, fighting is the most human trait that a man possesses. Go along with you, Watty; you want to upset the whole scheme of creation, and you fancy you'll do it as easy as you upset Danny Oge the day you and he had that neat set-to after you found the mark of his brogue on your hound."

Everybody laughed at his allusion to something that had happened the year before, when I had found it necessary to make an example of a bullying rapscallion with a red head.

"Danny Oge is nothing here or there," said I, somewhat confused by O'Brian's reference to a matter which had been a good deal commented on locally, though in truth I had often (I sorrow to confess it) beaten a tougher fellow than Danny of the red hair; for I found out his weak point after he had swung a fist or two at me, and the moment I got my knuckles under his jaw—alas! I had not opened my heart to the Truth at that time.

I made this my apology to O'Brian. I had not opened my heart to the Truth, I told him.

"I' faith, you opened Danny's face for him at intervals, and I'm not so sure that when you shut up his eyes he thought you a whit more obliging," said O'Brian. "Anyhow," he continued, "we're counting you among the able-bodied men to stand by us in our extremity."

"So far as defence is concerned, my poor help—but I have heard nothing about the need for taking up arms," said I. "The war is far enough away

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from us, even if Cromwell has marched on to Wexford."

"He has marched on to Wexford," said my father, "and we have received knowledge of his intention to send throughout the country bodies of troops to carry out such schemes of carnage as may deter the people from rising. Father Mahony, who at Drogheda had some opportunities of gathering knowledge as to Cromwell's intentions, is of the belief that the reason he had for giving a pass to Captain Purdon was to enable him to spread abroad in the West the story of how the poor wretches were treated, and so cow the spirit of the Irish."

"But he reckons without a knowledge of the spirit of the Irish," cried O'Brian, and his face was white —whiter than Father Mahony's—at that moment. "By the One above us all, the Irish will teach him a lesson that will last him for the rest of his life. Ireland has been on fire with the flame of England's kindling for three hundred years, and the usurper thinks to quench that fire with the blood of the people! I tell you that I know Ireland and the Irish, and I tell you that the innocent blood poured out like water upon the heights of Drogheda will take voice and speak to the people of Ireland for centuries to come. Children yet unborn will talk of the curse of Cromwell, and his memory shall be abhorred by the people of England as it will be execrated by the people of Ireland."

"Amen and Amen," said Father Mahony, rising from his seat, and raising both his hands high above his head.

"Amen," I cried, carried away by the vehemence of O'Brian's feelings. I knew that my eyes were blazing and that my hands were clenched. In the silence that followed my exclamation, I glanced at Kathleen. A light was in her eyes, her face was

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glowing; and then I recollected how George Fox had in one of his sermons dealt with the sadness of the spectacle of a woman giving her admiration to the fighting man by choice. I must confess that just at that moment I was not greatly struck by the sadness of the spectacle.

"I have given one son to strike a blow for Ireland," said my father. "I would willingly give the other to fight for the King against the usurper. My grandfather got this Castle from his King, not from the Parliament of England, and by the help of God I will hold it for my King! God save the King!"

And then the four of us in that hall cried together, "God save the King!" and I felt as ready to fight as though I had never heard the voice of George Fox preaching peace.

The truth was that at this moment I perceived for the first time that the man who suddenly comes to appreciate the beauty and the righteousness of the doctrine of peace on the eve of a great conflict with an enemy on his native land, runs a very good chance of being misunderstood by ordinary people, who have ever been doubtful about the sincerity of opportune conversions.

Happily, however, I had been a sufficiently sincere brawler in the old time to escape any severe criticism from our friends on account of my lately found principles. Enough brawling in the past remained to my credit, so to speak, to prevent any but the most half-hearted sneers to be levelled against me. And, moreover, so little did these few sneerers believe me to be under the control of the principles of peace, that they took very good care that any remarks they had to make about me they made behind my back.

It would ill become me to boast, but I must say that at one time I gave up a good deal of my time

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to self-culture—that is to say, to the culture of the large muscles which become easily apparent in the arm, between the shoulder and the elbow, and also in those which lie in the region of the wrist. I found, without a great knowledge of anatomy, that an occasional contest with my fists was the best way of maintaining the former at their best, and that, beyond doubt, an encounter with the sword and dagger, facing a capable opponent, was an excellent method of keeping the latter in working order.

But what my thoughts were before the rafters of the hall had ceased to ring with the war cry of "God save the King!" I scarce knew, until O'Brian had once more given me a staggering blow between the shoulders, saying—

"By the powers! the lad is thinking that when a war is over is the best time for a man with peace principles in his heart to act up to them."

And that was, I found, exactly the thought which came into my mind.

"O'Brian," said I—I should have mentioned before that we always addressed the direct descendants of the Irish provincial chiefs by their surnames; the dignity of their position made the use of the English word "Master" ridiculous—"O'Brian, I have not gone so deep into the creed of peace as to enable me to say off-hand how they bear upon a simple question of defence of a sacred trust that hath been imposed upon one."

"Quite right, mo bouchaille," said he, with a shrewd twist of his head; "and if you take my advice you'll not go into the question until the war is over, and Cromwell has sailed once more for England, or mayhap, by good luck, for a place that is hotter even than Barbadoes, whither he would ship all the Irish that survive his slaughter. Yes, sir, the theology of peace is best conversed about

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when free from the distractions of the trumpet and the drum."

"I mean to defer all inquiry on this point to a more convenient season," said I. "Just now I incline to the belief that if a thief oppose with menaces a man of peace, that same man of peace would be justified in knocking him down, if only to save him from committing the crime of robbery."

"By the powers! sounder theology was never heard inside Trinity," cried O'Brian. "Come, now, Father Mahony, can you match that with all the faculty of St. Omer at your back? Divil a bit."

My father held up a hand.

"This is becoming too closely allied to the style of a Kerry discussion, when every one is expected to talk on all points of the compass except the point before the meeting," said he.

"True for you, Sir Gilbert," said O'Brian, with a loud laugh.

"The matter that we have all been talking about before you came in, my boy, lies in a nutshell," said my father, turning to me. "It hath come to our knowledge that Cromwell has a hope to spread terror through the West, where he knows there is a deal of fighting power left. He has a hope that the gentry will yield up their strongholds at the first glimpse they have of a Roundhead. Now it seems to O'Brian and me, to say nothing of Father Mahony, who started the scheme, that the only chance we have of holding our own is by joining in one solid body to make preparations for our defence. If the Irish gentlemen combine, and maintain their position with the resolution demanded by the situation of the hour, I think we shall at least show Cromwell that massacre and intimidation are not the best means of subduing a nation, more especially when that nation is one of Irishmen."

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My father had not at his command the inflated language of the Irish orator; indeed, he had a huge distaste for such mouthing of words; that was doubtless where his English origin made itself plain. But upon some occasions he found it impossible to express what he meant except in such phrases as might be said to have all the insincerity of rhetoric about them. After all, a good deal of rhetoric must be forgiven men whose homes are threatened with extinction, and whose sons and daughters are at the point of being sold into slavery. Is there any one who will blame my father for boasting, even in so small a company, of the spirit of the Irish nation?

My father had spoken slowly, except when uttering his final phrase; but this phrase was to O'Brian as a spark is to a barrel of gunpowder. He clenched his hands, and swore that there never had been a nation on earth worthy of being compared with the Irish nation; he challenged us as though we were his bitterest enemies, ready to oppose him tooth and nail on every point, to tell him when a nobler race than the Irish had ever existed in ancient or modern times. He shook his fist in our faces, heaping contempt upon our silence, and wound up his impassioned harangue by declaring that we should see before many months had passed how the Irish would show Cromwell that they were as indifferent to his presence among them as he was—or professed to be; he was so great a scoundrel, his word on such a point was worth nothing—to the warts which made his face even uglier, if that were possible, than his corrupt soul. "Cromwell," continued the impassioned speaker, "was the wart on the fair face of Ireland, but there were swords enough in the County Clare alone to pare off such an excrescence."

And the worst of the thing was that we all felt carried away by this flood of words. When O'Brian

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was "in spate," as they say in the North, he carried all before him—all except, perhaps, Father Mahony. I caught a glimpse of a curious dry smile lurking about the corners of the thin lips of the priest when O'Brian had thrown himself into a chair. I could easily understand how such a smile should be on the face of a man who had witnessed Cromwell standing alongside the breach in the walls of Drogheda, urging his Roundheads on to do the work of carnage. Such a man was not to be overwhelmed by the most burning oratory that ever came from a fluent Irishman, and it was the thought of this that caused the face of the priest to be puckered up in that sad smile for a second or two.

"Every word that O'Brian has said is true," my father remarked quietly, almost frigidly. "No time must be lost before we get our preparations on foot."

"So far as we are concerned," said I, "nothing need cause us great alarm. We have arms and powder and shot enough to last out a three months' siege. The cellars are full of flour, and the well in the court-yard is not likely to run dry. We have not much cause for fear at Castle Omeragh."

"Would to heaven we were as ready at the Tower," said O'Brian. "I counted on Cromwell's being kept before Drogheda for at least six months, and then on his making his way with whatever tattered remnants of his army had survived the siege, back to England. We're badly prepared for an attack, though I suppose we'd get through somehow."

Again Father Mahony smiled.

He could not but perceive how Irish-like was the second speech as well as the first of O'Brian. The long record of our country's struggles was a record of rhetoric linked with unreadiness. There was a

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long and impassioned speech announcing the ease with which Cromwell would be shorn off the face of Ireland, but when it came to a question of how to make the simplest defence, the most that could be said was that "we'd get through somehow."

The previous year, when my brother, seeing how the Parliamentary forces were carrying all England before them, had spent three months placing the Castle in a way of defending itself, O'Brian had passed many a merry jest round his table in regard to these precautions. Was it true, he had asked jestingly, that Sir Gilbert had got secret knowledge that Cromwell had set his heart upon being crowned King of England under the elk's antlers that hung in the hall of Castle Omeragh? Or was it possible that my father's ambition was to start a Parliamentary party in Ireland in opposition to that of England, and to get himself crowned at Castle Omeragh, as it was rumoured that Cromwell meant to do the same at Whitehall so soon as he got the King's head off?

Of course these jests had been taken in good part by my father. He continued his precautions, and strongly advised O'Brian to follow his example in regard to the Tower. And then O'Brian had easily promised to take his advice, but had never done so, and thus he was left to say that he supposed, in case of an attack being made on the Tower, he should "get through somehow."

My father rated O'Brian soundly for his neglect, and at first O'Brian looked grave and called himself all the hard names that occurred to him in English and Irish—the latter tongue has got many shades in its delineation of darkness of character, and O'Brian chose the very blackest to apply to himself.

Just when I began to feel pity for him, and was about to entreat of him to spare himself—for indeed

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he seemed to be on the border of tears—he pulled himself together, saying in his usual hearty voice :

" And now that that's done, for the lord's sake, Gilbert, call for a horn of your oldest uisque, for 'tis hoarse I am with blackguarding myself."

We all laughed—except Father Mahony, and in a few moments there arrived a big silver bowl of the Irish drink which, in our native playfulness, we call uisque, for in the language of the South uisque is the word that means water.

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CHAPTER X

I HAD a chance of a short conversation with Kathleen after dinner, and making some references to my voyage to America, I ventured to say a word or two about Harry which I hoped would tend to console her, though I will say that, like the brave girl she was, she showed little signs of breaking down when I touched at first with the greatest tenderness upon the sorrow which I knew could not but lie very close to her heart. My love and admiration of the girl, who, though so recently bereft of her lover, could still hold her feelings so well in hand as she did, lest my pain should be increased thereby, well nigh rendered me incapable of speech. Ofttimes had I read in the poets of a woman's power to mask the deepest feelings of her heart, so that all her intimates with whom she mixes daily can make no guess of the truth; but never before had I the chance of seeing how actual such gracious dissembling can be or how far it can go.

From her manner of speaking of Harry and of receiving all that I had to say of him—and I know that I was very gentle of touch, knowing how easily a recent wound may be reopened—one might have been led to think that he was no dearer to her than an ordinary friend of some years' standing might be.

"Poor fellow!" she sighed, when I talked to her of his horrible case. "Poor fellow! he was so brave! Oh, he never knew what 'twas to fear!

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He talked of going to the war, from the moment when the clouds began to gather, and he left with a song on his lips, and in his eyes the light of battle. And now . . . oh, the pity of it! the pity of it, Walter!"

She shook her head sadly, but, as I have said, she showed not the least sign of breaking down. Womanlike, she was able to veil her deepest feeling.

"Would to God that I could speak a word that might be a comfort to you!" I said. "Ah, how you must have felt his loss, Kathleen!"

"Truly I did, but he came and took leave of my father and me. 'Twas you who were the one to go away without a word to either of us; and now you have been at home for a whole month with never so much as a ride through the glen to us."

She had, with great adroitness, turned our converse into another channel. I felt that I had been coarse, albeit that I fancied that I had been gentle in handling a topic whose tendrils, as it were, clung very close about her heart; the tenderest touch could scarcely fail to wound.

But though she could not stand a continuance of our converse about Harry, she was still careful, as I have said, that I should not be pained. She was actually smiling while she brought forward her charge against me of discourtesy.

I looked at her, thinking,

"If she could but read my heart!"

I was looking at the floor while I tried to make my apology to her.

"I cannot excuse myself for the going away without saying farewell to my two best friends," said I. "But you will not be hard upon me when you think that I had no intent to cross the Atlantic when I left Ireland. 'Twas when I heard the preaching of George Fox——"

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"Oh, yes," she said; "the preaching of George Fox . . . I wonder shall we ever learn why you went to the colonists at Boston, Walter?"

I had heard that they were inclined to religion at Boston—more so than they were in the Virginia Plantations," I replied, "and I felt that in a young and religious community the principles which had so impressed me would——"

"Ah, dear Walter," she said with another smile, and with a little sigh that had more of humour in it than the smile. "Ah, dear Walter, when one hears of a young man who hath all his life borne an unblemished reputation for strong muscles, and a will to use them in season and out of season—when one hears, I say, that such an one feels the need to spread abroad the doctrine of peace, one cannot but feel that something has gone wrong with him. Now, prithee, Walter, what was it that went wrong with you, and so drove you out to America?"

I know that I hung my head again. How could I tell her that I had gone away because of the love that I bore her? How could I give her the pain of hearing such a confession? How could I be a traitor to my brother?

"I talked to George Fox," said I, "and he——"

"Ah, sir, have we not played the game of the 'Fox and the Goose' long enough?" she said. "But I perceive that you are not brave enough to open your heart to me—to me that might be able to give you a word of counsel—mayhap more than a word—that might ease your pain. Is there nothing that you would tell me at this time, Walter?"

For one moment I felt weak. A burning desire took hold upon me to tell her my secret—to tell her that I had gone away because of my love for her, and that, in spite of all, I had come back loving her

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more deeply than ever. I had even bent forward in the eagerness of that impulse, and with my eyes fixed upon her face, a word or two broke from my lips before I succeeded in controlling myself. The thought of the treachery to my brother, who was perhaps at that very moment suffering all the agony of a voyage in what was virtually a slave ship—the thought of the treachery to my own self-respect—the thought that such a confession would rob me for ever of the companionship of the girl herself, came in time to save me; and when my first faltering was over, I felt strong once more.

"Alas, alas!" I cried. "I need no counsel in regard to the one sorrow—I mean the one joy of my life."

"That is a hard saying; what is it that can be both a sorrow and a joy at the one time?" she said, lifting up her hands in a very pretty attitude of surprise.

"There is but one thing that is both a joy and a sorrow," I replied, somewhat mournfully I fear, for she looked at me for a moment, and then burst into a laugh.

"Watty," she cried, putting her head perilously close to mine, and speaking in a whisper that had a silvery ripple of mocking humour in it. "Watty, I believe that you are e'en in love."

I sprang to my feet, and once again I had a fierce struggle to remain true to my brother. Its effect this time was extraordinary, for it appeared that I could only refrain from telling her that I loved her by making her believe that I hated her, for there was anger in my voice when I turned upon her, crying—

"'Tis not for you to talk to me thus lightly about love. Heaven forgive you for it, Kathleen! How can you talk in this light fashion when my unhappy

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brother is at this very moment, it may be, suffering the agony of the thought that he is separated for ever from the one whom he loves ? "

She became grave in a moment. She turned her eyes mournfully and reproachfully upon me.

In an instant I was kneeling at her feet. I had caught both her hands in mine and kissed them passionately before I quite knew what I was doing.

" Forgive me, oh, forgive me, my dear, my dearest Kathleen," I cried. " How could I ever say those cruel words to you ? Ah, dear Kathleen, do not think for a moment that I fail to appreciate what is in your heart. Do not think that I cannot see how you smile and speak with this semblance of lightness only to soften the poignancy of the grief I feel in regard to Harry. Ah, child, I have seen how brave you have been—hiding your own grief, lest seeing it might increase my pain. Forgive me for my cruelty, dear Kathleen. Tell me that you forgive me."

She looked at me as I knelt at her feet—tenderly and mournfully for a long time.

" Poor Walter ! " she said at last. " You are surely the least selfish of men—yes, and the blindest."

" Nay," I cried, " not so blind neither, for, indeed, I perceived from the first what was in your heart. You bravely kept back those tears of yours that were ready to fall, lest I should be pained. Ah, yes, dear Kathleen, you could not hide from me what is in your heart."

She shook her head, and the sweet trustfulness on her face increased.

" If you are as loyal to the King as you are to your brother, Charles the Second will have at least one faithful subject," said she. Then with a sigh she motioned me to rise. " I suppose 'twill all come right some day," she continued, and now her

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head was turned away from me and her cheek was resting on one of her hands.

"I am sure of it," I cried heartily. "Oh, yes; do not doubt that everything will come right. Harry is not the man to remain a prisoner or to become a slave. He has many resources. Oh, his head is at all times full of schemes, and 'twill be strange indeed if he fail to realize at least one of them to effect his quick release. Lift up your heart, Kathleen; he will be beside us again before many months have passed."

"God send that he may come soon," she cried, "and that he bring with him some simple culled from the forest at Barbadoes that may be a sovereign balm for eyes that see not matters which lie plain before them."

That saying puzzled me sorely.

I suppose that, with her usual quickness, she perceived that this was so, for she gave a little laugh, saying—

"'Tis a pity that the days of the Crusaders are no more. You would have made a fine Crusader, Walter. You have within you a true sense of chivalry."

"I have now and again found myself longing for such an emprise," said I. "But what is it that suggested the Crusaders to you?"

"It was a distant thought of Damascus," she replied.

"Damascus? But why should your thoughts fly thitherward?"

"It has been taught to me at the convent of Cashel that it was when journeying to Damascus that the scales fell from the eyes of the blessed St. Paul. What a pity 'tis, I thought, that Walter Fawcett could not make a journey thither for the sake of his eyesight."

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Now that saying of hers puzzled me more than anything that the girl had yet said in my hearing. It seemed to lead me nowhither. I suppose my face must have betrayed the gropings of my mind to find, in the absence of any light from within, a way to the heart of her mysterious words, for she put up a protestant hand to me, crying—

"Oh, prithee, friend Watty, set not your brain upon the rack, for take my word for it, when you become bogged in a phrase, the more you try to struggle out of it the deeper you sink in it. Ah, forgive me, Walter, for throwing a dark phrase before you. Indeed, I was crueller than one who flings a coin to a blind beggar."

I may have been wanting in perception, but still I could see well enough that she meant no ill to me when she compared me to a blind beggar. She only meant—well, I was not sure at that time what she meant, though I think I could make a pretty good guess at it now.

Then, before I could more completely embog myself, my father entered the room with O'Brian beside him, and questions were put to me as to the whereabouts of the two demi-cannon and the saker, which had at one time been in the armoury of the Castle. 'Twas like coming from a bog to solid ground, this diversion. However I might flounder through a girl's enigmatic phrases, I could not be puzzled in any question of cannon, demi-cannon, drake, culverin, saker, or any other form of ordnance on ship or shore.

"Mayhap 'twill go against his conscience to have any traffic with such munitions of war," said O'Brian.

"Nay," said my father, "his conscience would smite him only if he had lost sight of those implements of defence."

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"He hath two sets of conscience, it seems to me," said O'Brian; "the one is a sort of theological conscience, but it in no way interferes with the other, which is for every day use."

"The demi-cannon are on the roof of the tower," said I, "and can be mounted within the hour, to command the glen track from the east; the saker hath been in use for some time past as a prop for a cauldron on the kitchen hearth on washing days."

"Loaded or unloaded, Watty?" cried O'Brian, pretending to await my answer with great interest.

"Sir," said I, "a piece of ordnance that hath resting on it a copper cauldron of substantial frame must be reckoned as fully loaded."

"Would the plan of kitchen defence be greatly imperilled by the removal of the weapon to another sphere of usefulness, think you?" asked my father.

"By the powers," cried O'Brian, "'twould take a braver man to capture it, if defended by Biddy, the cook, than would be needed to take such a weapon from old Noll himself."

"If there be any thought to lay siege to the kitchen, be advised in time, and abandon such an enterprise, Sir Gilbert," said Kathleen. "In the course of a single week, Biddy could make your position so untenable, that you would be glad to come to any terms with her."

Thus the tennis ball of converse was tossed about the room, till every one had lost sight of the matter that had first set it flying. We were all vastly diverted; but the question of the defence of the castle got further removed with every sally, and O'Brian rode away with his daughter without showing that he remembered that an enquiry had been made closely concerning the future of our stronghold. So it had been with O'Brian and hundreds of the other old Irish gentry. They had begun to

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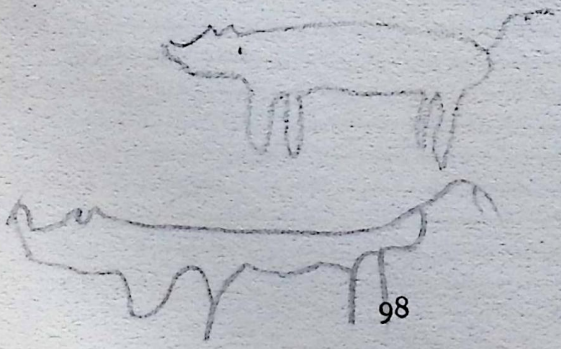
talk of defending themselves from the day that Strafford had been recalled to England. There had been countless quips at every meeting, and plentiful laughter; every one had gone homeward in exceeding good humour; but no step was taken in the work of organising a defence of the castles that commanded the glens. Only a few towers, and those were in the hands of the descendants of the undertakers, were put in such a condition as promised even a week's resistance against the cannons of the Parliamentary Army.

My father shook his head, after speeding our guests.

"We must get that saker brought to its post to-morrow, Walter," said he promptly. "It will be masked by a battlement to command the approach to the causeway, and we should be able to give a good account of any force that ventures to attack us from that quarter."

My father, at any rate, had not allowed the saker to be buried for ever under the *débris* of the aimless chat that had followed the question of its whereabouts.



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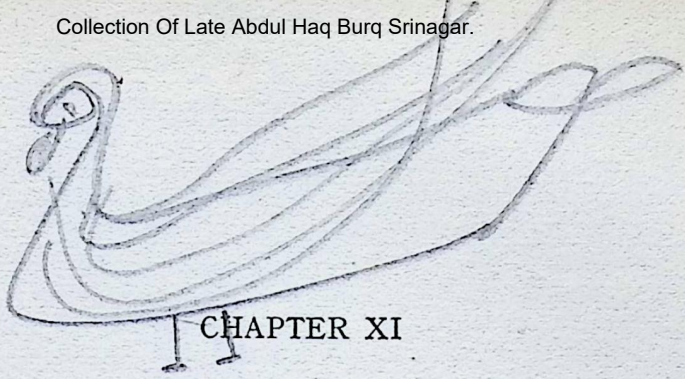

CHAPTER XI

THE next week brought us the news that some thousands of Ormond's army had, after capitulating, expressed their willingness to join Cromwell's forces, and that they had been accepted for service against Wexford, whither the Parliamentary men were now marching.

These tidings came to Father Mahony, but how we knew not. The priest had secret means of learning the chief events that were taking place not merely in the East, but in the North, where the Lagan army were ever victorious under Colonel Coote ; and though we were somewhat perturbed by the news, albeit 'twas no new thing for a beaten Irish force to take service in the enemy's army, we had reassurance that Lord Iveagh's regiment and Colonel Hugh Boy MacCavragh O'Donnell's regiment, each made up of a thousand Ulster men, staunch and true, would give a good account of themselves in defending the town of Wexford. They were known to be skilled in the use of the Ulster pike, which in those days was much longer than the ordinary Irish pike. Lord Iveagh had also a pretty fair force of targeteers, so that I at least had great hopes of Wexford.

Father Mahony came to my room with these tidings late one night. (For reasons which will be plain to most people, Father Mahony's tidings usually came to us late at night.) I had been since noon busy at the work of mounting into its position

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the saker which we had captured from the cook—no, I am unduly boasting: we did not capture the saker, we had only effected an exchange for it with Colonel Biddy; we sent a trumpet to her with a white flag, offering her the larger fragment of a broken quern for her cauldron in place of the prop which she had, and after some shrill negotiations, and an assurance that this transaction would not prejudice her right to resist any further attempt to deprive her of the chattels which she held as her own by the privileges of Breton law, six of our retainers came staggering forth beneath the weight of the weapon; and I had duly mounted it on the low parapet, commanding the causeway at the great door.

I had not, however, gone to bed; the truth being that I had discovered on the book-shelf a copy of Mr. Ward's *Animadversions of War*, and I thought that I might find in its pages something of value to me.

Well, Father Mahony told me all that had just reached him touching the movements of Cromwell's men toward Wexford; and we talked over it all for some time in a dispassionate way, for the priest had at his command none of that rhetoric which, coming from O'Brian, sounded in the ears of all whom he assailed, like the blare of a trumpet blast—if there was within reach of his fist the back of a chair or the sounding timbers of a table, he was not slow to provide a drum music to go with his trumpeting.

When our conversation showed signs of waning, Father Mahony began to walk fitfully about my room, examining without any great show of interest some of the objects on the shelves and about the walls. He smiled as he gave a little tap upon the hollow stomach of my lute, but there was really no animus in his smile, though the sight of the lute must

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have brought back to him many memories of the days when I was learning to play upon that instrument in the room next to the one which he occupied. (He was a forgiving man.) And then he took from its hook one of my pair of French pistolets, and, more like a man than a priest, ran his eye down the barrel. When he had hung it up once more, he glanced at the backs of the half-dozen books on the shelf, and picked out the volume by Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*.

"A pretty conceit!" he said. "I mind me having had a copy myself upon a time."

"Why, that is the self-same copy; you gave it to me," said I.

"Why, so I did," he cried. "I had forgot."

And even while he was returning the tome to its place between a stumpy *History of the Siege of Constantinople*, and a lank Sir Andrew Aguecheek sort of folio on the feeding of Peregrines, his eyes were dwelling upon one of the reliques of the great Spanish ship that was wrecked on our rocks out of King Philip's Invincible Armada. It was a piece of glass, cut into the shape of an Egyptian Pyramid, and fastened to a flat edge of silver, graven all over with Roman numerals, with here and there a picture of a blazing sun, and on the under part with the Signs of the Zodiac. A little sliding index finger moved in a narrow slit made along one edge of the rim.

He looked at this curious thing for some time without speaking, and his finger remained on the top of the book which he had slipped into its place.

"What doth that strange crystal object here, and whence did it come?" he enquired, and in spite of the tone of his voice being very nearly as usual, I had no difficulty in perceiving that he was interested in my glass pyramid.

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"'Tis a queer thing that I found in one of the fishers' cabins at Kilkee," I replied. "I gave the fellow a groat for it. He was well satisfied. It was plainly among the treasure trove of the Armada ship. The motto on it is in Spanish."

He had taken the object from his hands and was turning it about, full of curiosity.

"Know you not what manner of instrument it is?" he asked.

"I thought at first, and my father did so also, that it was an instrument of navigation," I replied. "You perceive the graving of the sun, and on the other side the signs of the sun's path. But I have never seen any reference to such an instrument in any book on the astrolabe and such like implements. Mayhap you can tell us its use, father. You have lived in Spain."

He did not reply to me at once. He was examining the little pointer, shifting it about in its groove,

"I have heard of this instrument," he said, after a long pause. "'Tis not truly of Spain, but of Morocco. 'Tis one of the strange inventions of the Moors, and brought by them into Spain when they were masters of that land. There is a dial in one of the open courts of the Alhambra—the Moorish palace in the Moorish city of Granada—upon which many learned men have spent years of their lives making an endeavour to unravel the mystery of its origin and the purpose it was meant to serve. 'Twas the monk Juan de la Perez that had seen, when a prisoner at Sallee, such a glass pyramid as this, who solved the mystery of the dial, showing that it was in close relationship to the instrument for casting horoscopes, which, too, had its origin among the Moors. He told as much as he thought men in general should know about it; the remainder he told to me."

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"Is it of the devil?" I asked. "No, it hath not got a devilish look about it; but is not everything evil that has had its beginning among the Saracens?"

"It would be going too far to condemn it wholly because mayhap the devil got a word in edgewise," said he. "But as for this—this toy, if indeed it be a toy, and not as Juan de la Perez said it was, an instrument as wondrous as the perspective glass—you have handled this oft, I doubt not, son Walter?"

"Oft enough," I replied. "I have not yet found it to show any of the properties of the perspective glass."

"You knew not how to adjust it. But it was in this room on the night when you went forth to walk on the cliffs and found me awaiting you there. It was here when you looked into the darkness and found yourself staring at your own face."

"That is true. But you cannot mean to say that one of the faces of that glass reflected my face in the darkness?"

"Nay, I have said naught of that. To say the truth, I know not what are all the properties of the thing—if it hath any properties whatsoever. Give me leave to bear it to my room until the morn."

"Take it, father, and keep it for as long as you will," said I. "But let me entreat of you to have care, lest you be led unwillingly to have traffic with one of the Daemons, which I have been told are the gods of the Saracens," I added mockingly.

He looked grave and gave me no answer. He continued fingering the pyramidical instrument—if indeed it should be styled an instrument; but after a while he laid it back on its shelf saying—

"I believe that I will let it be."

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"As you please," said I. "But I warn you that if you leave it here I shall e'en investigate it for myself, and if harm come to me, not having your specifics against the powers of the air, the blame will rest at your door."

This I said, perceiving easily that he was burning with eagerness to investigate the thing. He shook his head, walking to the door, but when there he looked back.

"The night is young," he said musingly. "I may spend an hour over it ere I sleep. 'Tis not more wondrous than the mariner's astrolabe—nay, or the mariner's compass, which came to us from China, and the Chinese are heathens still, in spite of the efforts of our missionaries. Who hath yet solved the mystery of the needle that evermore points to the north? Magic? There never was a magic, black or white, that could bring forth so great a marvel. I shall spend an hour over your relique of Philip's ship."

He picked up the glass pyramid with so ample a pretence of carelessness that I perceived in a moment that he was extraordinarily careful of it.

I wished him a good night, and he gave me his blessing more fully than was his custom, as though he wished to convince me that he was a good Christian Catholic, albeit that his interest was at this time centred in the mystery of the Saracens.

And when he left me I found that I had a mystery of my own to fathom; and this was, what Kathleen O'Brian had meant by her words in regard to my blindness.

How had she meant that I was blind?

What was it she meant that I had failed to see?

I pondered over these questions for a long time, and albeit that once I found myself horribly near a solution, yet it was one which, I felt, involved such

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treachery to my brother—ay, and to the girl herself—as affrighted me even to contemplate, and therefore I would have none of it, and a good hour after midnight I had not reached the heart of my puzzle.

In the course of the next day Father Mahony brought to me the glass pyramid.

"I did my best to recall all that the Monk Juan taught me about the wonderful dial at the Alhambra in Granada," said he. "But to say sooth, all his teaching in this matter did not sink very deep. I know that he began by reminding me how the mystery of mysteries in the world was still the great Pyramids of Egypt. No one living in the world knows wherefore they were built, and yet at some time in the history of the world there must have been no mystery in the matter. He himself had found at Sallee, on the border of Ethiopia, an ancient priest of the Egyptian god Osiris, who showed him what was the secret of the Pyramid. This helped him to a right understanding of the dial in the Moorish palace, and thence to a knowledge of such an instrument as this. I have no memory for all that he told me about the setting of the index finger. But 'tis well known that the mind is soothed by letting the eyes dwell upon clear surfaces—the azure of the sky, the soft green of a glen slope, the calm face of the sea. Now, my son Walter, I should like you when alone in your room to-night, after saying your prayers, to let your eyes look into the interior of this pyramid, without disturbing the position of the index, and taking care that the edge with this little slit upon it faces the north—you will do this and let me know if the effect upon you be soothing or the opposite. The thing may be but a toy."

"If you believe there is no hurt in it—that it is no more than akin to the mariner's astrolabe——"

"Be sure, my dear son, if I thought that there

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was any power of evil in it, I would send it flying through yonder window."

"If the moonlight were to strike on it in its flight, it might pass to the glen under the semblance of an angel of light, which would be to maintain the diabolical scheme to the end. Well, father, I shall give you the result of my observance in the morning."

Father Mahony gave signs of a certain reluctance to depart from my room. He once again examined the backs of my books, and made some remarks upon a few of them, then he suddenly turned to me, saying:

"It should never be forgotten, Walter, that there are properties in certain elements of the air—of the sunshine—of the moonlight—of which, up to the passing hour, nearly all men remain in ignorance, just as there are herbs in the field potent for good as well as evil. Scarce a year ago I heard from the mouths of two missioners of the orde of St. Francis that they had found in the land of Peru a tree whose bark has power to keep away the fever. Then we know that an arrangement of certain numerals hath mystical powers, though none can explain why this should be so. All this traffic is lawful, as is also the mystery of the mariner's compass. Since this is so, it cannot be unlawful to make investigation of the working of the forces of nature through other channels. You will take care that the index of the glass pyramid points like the gnomon of a dial, to the north, my son?"

"You may rest assured that I will follow your instructions, father," I replied. "If I were to fail in this respect, perhaps the forces of nature, being thus outraged, might make a wreck of the castle, and bury me beneath the masonry of my tower."

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CHAPTER XII

DURING this day, my father was planning with me the making of a mine in the stone causeway, to which I have made allusion. No one could have a doubt that if a hostile force once got foot upon this causeway, the Castle would be in imminent peril. If, however, we had the power to destroy it suddenly, a besieging force would have to climb up the smooth rocks of the eminence on which the Castle was built in order to reach the door; so that, even if Cromwell's cannons were to batter in the door, or make a breach in the walls, we might still laugh at any attempt to carry us by assault.

Of course I was not blind to the many nods and winks which were exchanged among the Irish retainers of the Castle when we set about this work of digging the mine; nor was I deaf to the remarks made by the workers and the still more numerous onlookers while the heavy stones were being removed.

"Sure, 'tis for the fairy gold we're seeking," one fellow called out to another who had asked him what he was grubbing at there for, at all at all.

"Whisht, y'omadhaun!" said an old woman. "Isn't it a grave for old Noll that the master has ordered! Go on with your work, mo bouchaille, or 'twill not be done in time."

My father and I joined in the laughter, for we knew the nature of the people too well to fancy that

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any attempt to make preparations to receive an enemy before that enemy was in sight would be viewed without derision, albeit of the good-humoured type which prevails in our country.

We had had such a busy day that I forgot all about the Moorish crystal until I was at the point of getting into bed, and I must confess that it was with a yawn and the muttering of an impatient word that I approached the relique of King Philip's Armada, and set my candle so that two of its sides were illuminated. I peered into the depths of the transparent thing, and for some time I could see nothing that one might not see within, it might be, the stopper for a flask; but suddenly I seemed to become aware of a curious molten motion—I can find no better words to express it—apparently within the glass, as though it contained a hollow chamber, and this furnished with a tiny mirror.

At first I thought that this was merely the effect of the rays of the candle quivering upon some of the unequal parts of the glass; but I soon became aware of the fact that in what seemed the little mirror, a blurr of mist was passing away as a light sea fog passes away before a newly risen moon. And then there appeared a curious glint of light, which I saw in a moment was the same as the corpse light that had illuminated (faintly) that face of myself which I had once seen. I immediately became interested more than I had yet been, especially when I found myself—the mist having passed—peering into a picture of a lovely bright blue sea, on which a vessel, arrayed in all her bravery of white sails, was standing, and the blue ripples had a glow of life in them, and were pulsating with the beating of the great heart of the ocean.

I fancied in an instant that I was not looking at a picture of the sea, but at the sea itself; and all at

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once I was conscious of that impression of being soothed which I ever derived from watching the sea, whether from the height of our cliffs or from the deck of a ship.

I gazed and gazed away with that dreamily agreeable sensation until . . .

I heard it as clearly as I had ever heard it before —the cry of the plover imitated by my brother; he was accustomed to utter it as a sign to me that he was at hand, ready for a shooting walk or for the hunting of a stag.

There, again, it came to my ears, and I knew that it came from the glen slope opposite to my window.

It took me some time to recover myself. Who is there that would not feel amazed beyond the power of action in such a case as this? He had suddenly come to us—the one who, we believed, was leagues away tossing on the Atlantic—on, it might be, such a sea as I was still gazing at in the heart of the crystal; he had come to us without a word of warning, and it was quite in keeping with his character to signal to me as he had done—as he now did for the third time.

It was quite in keeping with the strangeness of the incident that in a few moments it should cease to seem strange to me. A moment's reflection seemed to be sufficient to convince me that it was the height of absurdity to feel in any measure surprised that my brother should be calling his signal to me from the glen. I know that I did not rush to my window; I merely sauntered to it, and thrust my head through the lattice into the night.

It was too dark for me to see anything outside, on the glen slope or elsewhere; but as I stood there I gave the answering signal to his—the whistle of the curlew, that was understood between us to be my response to his plover note; and I know that

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mine was the better imitation. I whistled thrice, which was meant to tell him to abide where he was until I should get to his side. I made haste to go down the stairs and outside, not by the great oaken door, but by the postern at the side of my tower. I went round the steep narrow rock-path to the causeway, which I crossed, stepping among the masonry which we had dug up during the day.

I heard his laugh.

"A pretty watch is that which is kept from the battlements of this stronghold," said he while returning my salutation. "'Slife, brother, do you invite the enemy to enter and slit the throats of you all while you sleep?"

"'Tis too soon to look for an enemy," said I.

"'Struth, you are more Irish than the Irish," said he. "Too soon to look for an enemy! Pardie, 'tis never too soon but nearly always too late, let me tell you. But 'tis possible to urge such as you to take any prompt action. 'Tis always 'time enough,' or 'to-morrow,' with the Irish."

"Nay, you have but to take half a dozen steps on the causeway to learn the injustice that you do to us," said I.

"What means this ruin of stout masonry?" he cried.

"What, you a soldier, and yet fail to recognise the digging of a mine? Shame, sir!" said I. "Oh, no, we are not so neglectful as you seem to take us. We shall have a mine sunk that will give Cromwell's scouts a reception that they little dream of."

"Ciel! Is't possible that you do not know that the causeway was mined years ago?" he cried. "What, do you not know that the grey stone between the two white pebbles is the key of a mine that will carry a barrel of powder? Has no one

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told you that a leaden pipe goes from the mine to the kitchen wall for the explosion of the powder without the need for a fuse ? "

" I never heard of that," I replied ; " and if our father ever heard of it he hath forgot it."

" 'Twas kept a secret, I know," said he ; " for if it had come to the ears of any one in this region, 'twould be known all over Ireland the next day. The kitchen end of the leaden tube is hidden by a brick at the corner of the hearth. Remove that and you will find the loop of a wire ; the further end of this same wire holds an iron skewer, which is made red hot and then forced again up the tube until it touches the powder at the right moment. Examine it for yourself, but for heaven's sake go not through the glen proclaiming the secret."

" I think we are to be trusted in ordinary matters of discretion, brother," said I.

" And be advised, Watty ; place a sentinel on the parapet of the tower night and day, and inspect him yourself at no fixed hour. If you find him asleep at any time shoot him dead. We are not playing the game King of the Castle just now. To be sure, you may look for grumbling, and the old mother of a lazy son hasting to you crying ' wirastroo ! ' but shoot the rascal dead, mother or no mother, and you will have the satisfaction of feeling that you have saved maybe the lives of all within the Castle."

" I shall mount a sentinel on the parapet in the morning," said I. " But why do we remain without at such an hour ? Come within. Oh, my dear brother, 'tis glad I am that you are safe and sound. We heard so much about your being made a prisoner and sent out as a bond servant to Barbadoes. But our father would have it that you would give a good account of yourself. And he was right. Come

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within, Harry, and tell us how you 'scaped. You must tell us all before you sleep."

He gave a little uneasy laugh.

"Nay, not to-night, brother," he said. "'Twill be a full week before I shall be able to tell you anything."

"Do not trifle, Harry," said I. "Why cannot you enter to-night?"

"'Tis hard to excuse myself," said he. "Had it rested only with myself I could have come hither near a week ago; Father Mahony's parting gift to me did its work well. But, sooth to say, there is another to take into account—one who is dearer to me than life itself. My love and duty to her make it needful that I should be with her."

For a single moment—I will not do myself the wrong to say that it was for more than that moment—I was conscious of a little pang at heart. Then the thought came over me, overwhelming every other thought:

"*Kathleen will be happy.*"

But the voice was a very low one in which I said to my brother:

"She will be happy! Oh, she will be happy indeed."

There was a grave note in the way he repeated the words:

"She will be happy—please God she will be happy. If true love—the devotion of a true heart—but words—what are words? Brother, 'tis only suffering that proves the truth of love, and oh, my God! have we not suffered?"

"You are right," I said. "Suffering and love must ever go together. They walk hand in hand. I know it—I know it. You will be worthy of her, Harry; I know from the way you have spoken to-night that you mean to be worthy of her."

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"With God's help, brother—by the grace of God," said he devoutedly.

He put his hand out to mine, grasping it fervently, and at that touch my tears would no longer be restrained. When that watery mist had passed from my eyes he too had passed. I saw only the high slope of the glen, black beneath the stars, but with the rich bloom as of velvet spread over it. He was gone. He held in such high reverence the duty of a lover that he refused to enter his father's door until he had first seen the lady of his love face to face.

I waited where we had stood together, thinking it might be that I should catch a glimpse of a black figure at that part of the glen track which went nearest the ridge, and would thus let him be seen against the background of starry sky.

I waited and watched in vain.

I sent my curlew note after him thrice, and it whistled clear and shrill through the night.

I waited and listened for the cry of the plover in response.

I waited and watched in vain.

I heard the whispering lisp of the countless rivulets that the evening's rain had sent running down the glen side; I heard the faint sound, wasted through the distance, of the never-slumbering sea—the wizened shriek of a rat in the talons of its enemy; but nothing more.

I turned and re-entered the Castle by the postern, full of gladness, but at the same time with that misgiving which one sometimes has in the midst of a happy dream—a feeling as of someone whispering.

"It is but a dream: it will pass as other dreams have passed."

"But it was no dream—no dream—no dream.

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Here am I—I myself walking up the stairway, and I have spoken with him face to face," I kept on saying to myself until I reached my room.

But still there was with me that same impression of having a strange dream-experience—nay, I had the feeling that even when I was saying, " It is no dream," I was dreaming. That was why I refrained from going to bed for some time. I was afraid that in the morning I should feel a disposition to doubt that the strange thing that had happened was real. I knew that no stranger thing than this could have happened. But it had happened, let it be ever so strange.

But what did it matter whether I awoke in the morning with a doubt or with no doubt. Harry was certainly among us once again, and he would, perhaps, be with us the very next day—he had himself said three or four days, but I was certain Kathleen would send him to us when she came to know that his devotion to her had caused him to refuse the shelter of his father's roof until he had first seen her—the sentiment of the true lover, backed up by the resolution of the soldier.

And then there was the revelation which he had made to me respecting the secret of mine in the causeway. If we discovered that the mine and the machinery for exploding it were in actual existence, no one could disbelieve my story, marvellous though it would sound in some ears.

I went to bed, after thanking heaven fervently for sending my brother back to us without hurt—nay, a better man than he had ever been, for I could not hide it from myself that in the past Harry had been too greatly disposed to regard with lightness and even carelessness the sacred passion of love. But what had he said to me just now?—"*'Tis only suffering that proves the truth of love.*"

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There was no mistaking the seriousness of his tone when saying this. He that had been so careless in these matters for long—flitting with the inconsistency of a moth round every fresh flower—had at last learned the truth—had at last learned what 'twas to love. I had not made a mistake when I felt assured that the moment he had begun to love Kathleen his time of constancy had come. He had become aware of the treasure that awaited him—the love that was not to be lightly regarded or squandered, spendthrift though he had been before.

I went to sleep with those words of his in my mind—in my heart—and if he felt their truth, surely so did I.

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CHAPTER XIII

WHEN I opened my eyes it wasto see Father Mahony standing by my bedside.

I started up, and in an instant I knew that my fears lest I should be disposed to think of what had happened in the light merely of a dream, were groundless. On my mind there was no doubt whatsoever, from the moment I opened my eyes.

I started up crying:

"He has come—I know what you are about to tell me, but I know it already; I have seen him."

He gazed at me, then crossed himself devoutly.

"In the name of Heaven, son Walter, tell me what you mean," he said, in a low voice that had something of fear in it.

"Oh, I thought for a moment that he had perchance appeared at the Castle, and that you were here to tell me of it, being deputed to break the news tenderly to me, lest I should be overcome," said I. "Oh, yes, he has returned safe and sound, Father; he called me out to him, and we talked together for some time, but he was swayed by the sentiment of the devout lover, for he would not cross the threshold of his home until he had first seen his lady."

"In heaven's name, son, tell me what is't that you mean?" he cried, and wonder was in his eyes.

"Have not I made myself plain beyond the need for any explanation?" said I. "I tell you that he came——"

"He—who—who came?"

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"Why, who should come only my brother Harry?"

"How is that possible? Whence did he come, and how?"

Only at this moment did the recollection come to me that I had omitted asking these somewhat important two questions of my brother. I had for some reason or other asked him neither whence he had come, nor how he had come. I had indeed treated his visit as though it were not extraordinary.

"I cannot tell you, Father, for he did not tell me," I replied. "But it matters little whence he came or how; is't not enough for us to know that he hath indeed come, and that we shall see him before the week be past—he said himself that he would return hither in a few days—not sooner; but I have hopes that the space will be shorter? And now, my good Father, gaze not at me as if I were the ghost which you think I have seen, but give me leave to pull on my hose."

Still he did not move.

"Tell me all that happened," he said, in a voice that was no louder than a whisper. "The crystal pyramid——"

I laughed.

"My dear Father," said I, "I ask your pardon in the matter of this same crystal pyramid. I gave you my promise to note it with care last night, but I had been working so hard, and I felt so wearied at bed-time that I well-nigh forgot all about it. But, indeed, I thought to keep my promise, and I had actually set my eyes upon the thing, and really seemed to note a curious movement deep within the crystal as of the ripples of a sea. I give you my word that I was becoming interested, and, mayhap, would, in spite of my weariness, have a story to

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tell you this morning, but that, at the critical moment of my observing, I heard the sound of the plover's note, which told me that Harry was awaiting my coming. Well, I think that you will easily allow that that was enough to send from my mind for the rest of the night all thought of the pyramid."

I saw him avert his head, and his lips move as if he were whispering a prayer. He was so doing. He crossed himself before turning again to where I was tugging at my hose, for I judged it better to pretend that I had not noticed him.

"'Tis no matter about the crystal," said he. "You can observe it at a more convenient season—a curious toy. And he came to you—our dear Harry! Did he say how he had 'scaped?"

"He gave all the honour to your parting gift of the little file; he told me so, indeed," said I.

"He should have given the glory to God," said he, solemnly.

"He will do so, later on, I doubt not," said I. "Just now—but he did not part from me without giving me some good advice—the counsel of a soldier. A sentinel must be set on the tower this very day; and mind, Father, I will not show any mercy to one who neglects his duty, and to sleep when on duty means death."

"That was his counsel? Who is it that will say he was not sent to save us out of the hands of our enemies?"

"And that was not all. He told me that there already hath been dug a mine in the masonry of the causeway, which can be fired from the kitchen—an old mine; no one seems to know of it save only Harry. He pointed out to me the stone in the masonry at the side, which only has to be removed to make way for the keg of powder. Pity 'tis that he did not find it convenient to come before we had

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begun work yesterday. We should then have been saved some travail.'

"He came, but he could not stay? Wherefore?" asked the priest; and I could see even now that he had no great faith in my story.

"Nay, Father, 'twere but to waste time to repeat what I have already said," I cried. "I have need to dress if I am to profit by Harry's counsel. What, sir, think of the shame of his returning to-day or on the morrow to find that naught hath been done. I tell you that I shall post a sentinel on the battlement within the hour. He shall be shot if he sleeps at his post."

Father Mahony went slowly to the door, but before I had begun my towel-work, he returned to me. There was an expression of some anxiety on his face while he said:

"Walter, it seemeth to me that 'twere for the best for you to withhold for the present from your father or any one at the Castle what you have seen."

I paused with my great brass jar of water already poised over the basin, while I turned my head to ask Father Mahony what reason there was for my refraining.

"When Harry returns on the morrow—as I hope—will he not have just cause to feel hurt that I did not think it worth while relieving the anxiety which my father feels on his behalf?" I said.

"Let me entreat of you," he cried earnestly. "I will confess that this counsel was mine, and I will take all the blame of it. I do not think that he will condemn me utterly. Walter, take my word for it, silence is the best for the present. No traitor spy ever gained from a man who keeps his lips tight sealed, any information to carry to an enemy."

"Father Mahony, are you mad—my father—spies?" I cried on the verge of anger.

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"Sir, how have you dared think that I should be base enough to couple your father's name with the word of traitor?" said the priest with flashing eyes. "I know, and so do you, that if all Cromwell's army were to appear before this Castle to demand that I should be given up, your father would lie dead among its ruins sooner than comply. But I tell you at this moment there is secret knowledge being sent to Cromwell about us and O'Brian. If 'twere known that Harry had found his way hither——"

"But to tell my father——"

"Dear son, prithee let me guide you in this matter. Your father might think that he was keeping the secret, while all the time he would be telling it, not to the ears, but to the eyes of all about him. There are some people in this region—mayhap within the Castle itself—who are as ready to form a judgment from observing the changes in one's aspect from day to day, as they would be from hearing the veriest babbler proclaiming his secrets. Walter, be guided by me, I entreat of you. Tell no one of the night's happenings."

It was in a very half-hearted way that I gave my promise to keep silence; but he thanked me with all his heart.

It was only when he had left the room that I found that I had failed to ask him if the sudden appearance of my brother in our region would not do more to inform one ready to play the spy, of the fact of his having made his escape, than any possible change in my father's bearing would be likely to do? He could say nothing to this argument.

(I have noticed that the argument which is absolutely unanswerable is ever the one which comes immediately after an opponent has departed.)

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But I had promised the priest—I do not think that I would have done so had I not been unpleasantly sharp with him—and I meant to keep my word. After all, I thought, there will be no need for me to keep silent for longer than a day or two. The secret will then reveal itself in the person of Captain Harry Fawcett.

My father was already putting the men in motion who were digging at the mine when I came down the stair.

Now, what was I to do in this matter? Was I to allow the work to be proceeded with, lest I should by revealing the secret of the old mine, be led to confess how I came to be possessed of the secret?

But how great a fool should I be were I to command the men to desist, and then find that Harry's memory had played him false in regard to the mine! I did not doubt that the men would cease work with great heartiness and perfect unanimity the moment that I gave the signal, but if I discovered that no mine was there, we should have a certain amount of trouble in getting them to return to their picks and shovels.

It caused me much thought and no small amount of inward debate before I made up my mind to let the fellows have another day's labour; it would not harm them in any way, and it might even add to the soundness of their slumbers at night. (On second thoughts I withdrew this point from my consideration of the question, for I knew that the soundness of their sleep was not capable of being increased even by so an unusua experience as a day of hard work.)

So I spent all my morning organising a plan of sentinels for the battlements of the towers; and the result of this scheme of indolence made a good impression upon the stalwart fellows who were of the

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Castle retinue. But when I explained to the band, who trailed their pikes with a droll affectation of veterans from the wars, that there was something of a drawback to the happiness of occupying a position of glory, which they supposed to be free from all danger, seeing that the necessity for absolute vigilance would compel me to shoot dead any sentinel who was caught asleep when on duty, either by day or night, the broad grins on every face narrowed. Only for a time however; then apparently the drollery of the situation appealed to them, and the twinkling of eyes out of abnormally solemn faces went down the whole line with the regularity of a military evolution, and I could hear the phrases whispered in Irish from man to man:

"His honour will never catch us asleep." "Is it his honour's excellence that's the man of peace?" —a question to which the reply came promptly in another inquiry from a red-headed fellow whom I had picked out for immediate duty—"And won't all of us be at peace after we're shot?"

Being concerned to maintain my dignity as the head of the household, I dealt this fellow a cuff on the side of his head which jeopardised the stability of the whole line, for he fell against the man on his left hand, and he, standing at ease with unusual rigidity, elbowed his neighbour, and his neighbour the next, so that another military manœuvre was executed with precision.

But my dignity was saved.

That night, when all the Castle was asleep—including, I am persuaded, the sentinel on the turret—I made my way to the great kitchen and stirred the coals of turf into a glow sufficient to allow me to find the spot indicated by Harry, whence the mine could be fired. I spent half-an-hour in the

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search, but I found it at last. The mouth of the leaden tube was to be seen, and even the loop on the wire. With a little tugging I was able to withdraw the wire, rusty though it was, a good inch or two.

This was enough for me. I hastened up to the postern and so out to the causeway. With one of the iron picks, which the worker had thrown from his hand the moment he got the signal to quit, I played about the masonry at the side, and when the keystone fell out I knew that I had lighted on the entrance to the mine. Harry had not forgotten the bearings either of the entrance or the firing end.

I went to bed with a light heart, and in the morning I made haste to find Father Mahony and to satisfy him that it was indeed my brother whom I had talked with the previous night.

"You perceive that, after all, it was not a dream of the night that called me forth," I said, with some note of exultation, for I could see that the priest had never been without his doubts on this matter. "Yes, Harry has returned, and we may look for his coming to us at any hour this day."

"He will not have come too soon," said the priest. "I have had another message from the camp at Wexford, and it tells me that small bodies of Roundhead troopers have been despatched in divers directions to harry and burn, so that the terror of the name of Cromwell shall spread all over the land. I doubt not that some of these brigands are now on their way hither, far to the west though we be."

"They shall never return to tell their master of our weakness," said I. "All the usurper's army would be needed to subdue the Irish of the West, and if we but remain true to one another, Drogheda may yet be avenged on Irish soil."

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I was the bearer of joyful tidings to the men, who were making a pretence of hard work among the stones of the causeway. Within an hour there was no sound of pick or spade at the place; for even the pretence of working hard calls for the play of certain faculties of eyesight and of hearing; and vigilance is needed on the side of the men to protect them from the vigilance of the master. All this is very irksome to fellows of spirit and determination — determination to evade any labour with the hands.

My father had this day ridden forth to urge upon some of our distant friends the need for making preparations for resistance, and he was not to return until the noon of the next day, so that there was no question of my telling him that Harry was at hand. I hoped with all my heart that Kathleen would force him to come to us before my father's return. I had pictured to myself the surprise—the delight of the old man when he should be met at the door of the Castle by his younger son. My imagination was strong enough to allow of my hearing the startled exclamation, and then the broken words of that greeting. The tears came very close to my eyes when I pictured the father with his hand on the shoulder of his new-found son, looking into his face as if to make up for the long space that had passed when no sight of that face was possible. Would he never turn his eyes away from that face? . . .

This was my dream all the day while I sat on the battlements of the tower, talking at intervals to the sentinel, whose vigilance at this time was almost painful to notice. I remained for hours looking forth in every direction; but indeed it was not for an enemy I was looking, but for a friend—my dear friend and brother.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE morning had been rainy, as the mornings usually were; but with the noon there came soft sunshine and a gentle breeze blowing to us such scents of the sea as filled my heart with memories innumerable. On one side the splendid swelling slopes of the mountain were glowing in all the glory of their purple robes of heather, with here and there a broad irregular patch of living emerald, glittering with the moisture of a million rain drops. And far away beyond where the sharp curve of the furthest slope on which colour could be seen, cut into the face of the mighty grey mountain peak of Croagh Iar, I could just see the rim of O'Brian's Tower. It was eight miles away, but viewed from our high battlements in the clear air it did not seem to be half so distant.

And in the long broad glen at the foot of the Castle the lough lay black as ever; but its blackness was not the same as that of the great bog of Natherdhu which filled up all the flat space beyond the ford of the lough. The shining of the sun upon the treacherous bog-holes that seem to a stranger the firmest of footing, only imparted to them a more sinister aspect than that they usually wore. The bog was half an Irish mile across its narrowest part, and it was here that those who knew how to make the path, stepping from one solid place to another among the holes and turning sharply about a hundred yards or so from the southern side of the glen, were able to pass from side to side in safety.

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But if the slimy snake-bog—that is the meaning of the Irish word Nather—looked like the haunt of all that was repulsive, the colours of the peat soil where it began to slope upward among the rocks were a wonder to all who had eyes to see. The patches of purple, of yellow, and of green—green of every shade; and brown—such varieties of brown as may be seen on the leaves of the sloe during the first weeks of autumn; and red—such red as makes the copper beach flame through a month of summer—these patches of colour, I say, turned the glen into a glory to gaze at.

And I gazed at this glory all through the day, for I knew that one for whose coming I had longed, must cross the track from O'Brian's Tower to our Castle. I waited until the sun which was setting behind us in the sea, sent broad shafts of golden light through the lace-work of narrow clouds that floated above the mountain ridges, and bathed the opposite slope in light as pink as the pink of a transparent rose, while the mountain-side itself was as violet as the velvet sky of a summer night when stars are as scarce as the wisps of bog cotton among the violet heather at the foot of Cairn Darragh.

But still he was never in sight.

And then the glen began to feel the twilight, while the saffron of the sky made strange patches upon the surface of the lake where it was reflected. I saw in the distance a troop of red deer walking with their exquisite delicacy of tread down to the water to drink, a hind pausing to scratch her shoulder with a daintily poised foot. I saw the glint of a mallard's wing through the faint light.

He did not appear.

In a bad temper I went down the stairs into the Castle to eat some supper, and afterward to set the guard for the night.

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I was up betimes, feeling sure that before I had time to break my fast I would hear the sound of his hail through the glen, or mayhap the whistle of the plover which travelled far. But nought came to my ears from without, save only the beating of the rain and the tinkling of the thousand tiny rivulets of the hillside and the voice of the torrent echoing among the rocks.

An hour after noon my father and his two men returned to the Castle, and while we were having dinner, I told my father that I had discovered an old mine in the causeway with the tube and mine for firing the powder. I thought that he would now recollect having heard of the existence of this mine; but he made no sign to this effect. He heard my news with surprise and gave praise to my cleverness.

An hour after dinner the sun came out and I ordered my pony. I had made up my mind to go to O'Brian's Tower and bring back Harry with me, whatever he might say. The sentiment of the true lover which had caused him to refuse to sleep under a roof until he had visited his lady was, doubtless, one to be admired; but when it led to a flagrant neglect of his own people—a neglect which by inference was a denial that ought of duty was owing by him to them, I thought that the true lover's duty to his lady might be carried too far. I felt myself quite equal to administering a sound rating to Master Harry for his inconsiderate conduct.

I found by the time I had ridden three miles through the rain-freshened air, breathing of the sunshine that brought out all the sweet scents of the moistened herbage, that I was not in so severe a mood as that which afflicted me when I was watching the falling rain all the morning, with the disappointment of my brother's absence hanging on me like a wet cloak. I rode along the low track

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through the glen and splashed through the ford at the narrow neck of the lough, and so on to the higher track that led up the hill side, whence I should descend once more, only at the other side, before crossing the torrent that roared down the only formidable chasm in all the range of our mountains.

From the spur of the hill to which I had risen, a fine prospect is allowed the eye. The track goes undulating and winding for miles until it loses itself behind a spur of Linsabreeny; on the other hand the valley of the great bog opens before one like a great fan of many tints, with its pools here and there that have not the aspect of water, and give back only a brown glint to whatever sunshine the rest of the valley may hold. Then behind the spreading of sodden green moss, one can see, guarding the gap of Dunboyne, the full front of O'Brian's Tower.

It was in this direction I turned my eyes. I thought that it was possible I might see a figure that I should be able to recognise, coming either on foot or on horseback from the Tower. I only paused for a few minutes; the distance was destitute of any form of man or woman. I pushed on without delay.

Now a short way off the track, at the edge of the stretch of turf—the peat which is our sole treasure in this region—there stood the cabin of an old turf-cutter named Turlough Cullinan, and it was, I think, a tradition at our Castle, as well as at O'Brian's Tower, that none of us should pass by this track without dropping in to wish the old man good luck, and to receive his cheery response. I had done so since I was a child, for Turlough had been the husband of my nurse Gran, and I knew how greatly he valued the consolation of a twist of tobacco, provided it was only black enough. He

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had rarely to grumble at any deficiency of hue in any gift that I brought to him. The tobacco pressers at Limerick strove to maintain his ideal.

I had no need to guide my pony round the spur to the cabin; he turned off to the left of his own accord, and I gave an halloo, and an Irish hail to tell the old man that I was coming. I failed, however, to catch a glimpse of him among the freshly-cut brown sods, though I felt sure that he could not be far off, for his half-filled creel lay on the ground, and his ass stood cropping the coarse herbage on the rising ground above the cabin. I gave another hail and waited for a response, but, getting none, I pushed my pony on to the mud cabin, for the thought struck me that old Turlough might be sick.

The door of the cabin was open, as usual, and the moment the pony got within a dozen yards of it, he shied so suddenly as almost to unseat me. I quieted him and looked about for the cause of his surprise; but saw nothing except the remains of the osiers with which the old man made his creels. I shouted out once more to Turlough, and at the sound two black carrion crows that had been sitting on the thatch of the roof rose and flapped complaining into the distance.

I dismounted, and with the bridle over my arm, hastened to the door. The moment I lowered my head to look into the cabin, I started back with a cry, for hanging from the beam of the solitary room, was the old man, his hands tied behind him and a dreadful look on his face, while his tongue . . .

What seemed most frightful to me was that this ghastly object appeared to fill up all the space of the cabin. There did not look to be space enough within for any one else, even should one kneel on the clay of the floor. He had been drawn up close to the beam, and yet his feet were dangling, the toes

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turned horribly inward, within a yard of the floor.

Of course I recovered myself in a few seconds. I twisted the reins round the crutch of the turf spade which was planted into the ground, and with my pocket knife, standing on the rough bedstead, cut the cord above the old man's head. The body dropped to the ground in an amazing heap, in all the horrible awkwardness of one who has suffered a violent death; but, strange to say, the sole thought that I had was that my hand was dreadfully soiled by my catching of the twisted cord, and then I knew that the man had been hanged by the cord with which he was used to fasten his creel of turf upon his back.

A moment was enough to tell me that there was no life in the body. The hands, swollen by the bonds, were deathly cold. Poor old Turlough had been dead for several hours.

Some time had actually passed before I started up from where I was kneeling by the body, the thought that flashed through my mind being,

"*The Roundheads are upon us!*"

The knowledge that had come to Father Mahony by his secret messengers was the truth. Some bodies of troopers had been detached from the main army to go through the country and to burn and massacre, and so spread such terror among the people as should (Cromwell judged) prevent the possibility of a general rising, and at least one body of these brigands had travelled well-nigh as fast as the priest's spies to our neighbourhood. This was the first example we had yet had of the new scheme of warfare—that poor old man strangled with his own cord.

But with this knowledge there came to me an instant sense of my own danger. In that instant I had passed from a sense of the power of manhood

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to that of the apprehensiveness of the hunted animal. By instinct—a relic of the days of wild men—I found myself stepping aside from the open door to the shielding of the mud wall, and my fingers tightened on the grip of my knife, which I had snatched quickly from off the floor.

I listened breathlessly, not daring to move my head so that I might glance out through the doorway. I listened—I listened . . . I heard the sound of the flapping wings, and across the awkward distorted patch of sunshine on the clay floor two shadows floated. The crows had returned to their place on the thatch. Listening with that eagerness which strained muscles and made heart-beats sound like the patter of sheep crossing a stream by the plank, I could hear the scratch of the crow's talons upon the straw that held the heather of the thatch in its place, then the low throaty gurgle of birds. Then came silence.

Only for a while, however; before I had begun to breathe naturally again, I heard what sounded to my ears like the distant tramping of horses. My head bent forward, turning one ear to the aperture of the door. There could be no doubt about it; the sounds came nearer and nearer. In another moment the ruffians would see my pony, and they would stop to hold a hurried council as to how they should capture their second victim—their second?—their second?

Great heaven! not their second but their third, for these were surely the men who had murdered my brother yesterday or to-day on his way from the Tower to the Castle!

That was the thought which came to me when, as I looked for it, there was a pause in the sound of the approaching horses. The men had seen my pony. They had halted and were whispering together.

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I awaited the result of their decision, running a finger down the edge of my knife and feeling its point delicately. I saw that I could kill the first man who should be in the act of crossing the threshold. I would kill him between the moment that he raised his foot and put it again to the ground—I knew it.

The counsel was over; but now it was the sound of one horse only that I heard. One man only was coming to the entrance, and, by God, he was a dead man! I raised my knife, sideways so as not to break upon the outline of the patch of sunshine on the floor, and then—

The knife fell with a rattle upon the clay, for there came to my ears a laugh and the musical cry of my name. I was outside in a second, and I did not forget to pull the door close as I went out. She was seated on her pony only a few yards away.

"I saw your pony," she said. "I was coming to Turlough with a paper of snuff. I was not quite sure that I should make my offering to-day; you are certain to have brought him some tobacco. Mercy! Walter, what has happened?—some evil chance! You are as pale as death."

"Turlough is dead," I said.

"'Tis not possible!" she cried. "Have you seen him? Poor old Turlough! I shall dismount and go to his side. May his soul have rest!"

"Kathleen," I said, "I would not that you should see him now. You are not strong enough to stand against such a sight."

"Nay, I am sure strong enough to look again upon the face, albeit it be cold in death, of one whom I have loved well since I was a child," she replied. "You cannot think I am one to be feared at death, Walter."

"For God's sake, be persuaded!" I cried. "Kathleen, he hath been lying dead some time.

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His face—you would not know it. You do not want to be haunted by the memory of something horrible. Nay, I swear that I will not allow you to cross the threshold of the cabin."

"He has been murdered," she said in a whisper. "He has been murdered. I see it in your face. Why should you tighten my saddle-girths? For mercy's sake, Walter, tell me all that you know."

"I will ride back with you to the Tower," said I. "There is no need for fear. You are not one to become faint even in the face of real danger, Kathleen, and I know that to-day you will be strong. Ask me nothing more. You must trust me."

She gave a little sigh, and then smiled.

"Indeed I will trust you, Walter," she said. "It is you who will not trust me."

I had mounted my pony and wheeled him round.

"I will tell you all when we reach the wood of Craig-Darragh," I said.

We were riding round the curve of the hill; but suddenly I drew rein. If we were to continue on the track we should reach the open valley, and thus could be seen for miles on every hand. I determined to use more caution than I had ever called to my aid before.

"We will not keep to the track," I said. "'Twill be safer to ride by Glenreagh, till we can get round the rocks and into the boreen."

"Very well," said she. "I will go with you whither you will."

By the time we had gone through two miles of Glenreagh, and I was looking out for the grey rocks, where I meant to forsake the track and make a bold cut across the heather and so on to the boreen leading to the flat ground west of the great bog, I was breathing freely once more. It seemed pretty plain that the Roundheads, if there were

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indeed any who had tarried after their cruel work of the morning, had taken themselves off to the next cabin that might meet their eyes, hoping to have another chance of murdering a defenceless old man —perhaps a woman this time—a woman with a couple of children at her knee—that was the nature of the quarry they were in search of.

Then we heard the sound of the little brook that runs down the hill side to join the trout stream in the depths of the glen, and I felt still further encouraged.

"Cautious!" whispered Kathleen. "I caught just now a whiff of smoke."

We drew rein and I began to sniff like a hound searching for an elusive scent; but the place was not favourable in respect of its situation to this form of hunting for the scent. We were standing on the narrow track on the bluff of one of the many swelling hillocks on the glen side, and until we should get round it, we could scarcely hope to gain any knowledge as to whether or not any one there was building a fire. Certainly no smoke of turf was likely to pass over the hillocks to us.

"Have you caught another whiff?" I asked Kathleen scarcely above my breath.

She shook her head. The fact that she did not speak her reply assured me that she had confidence in the truth of her former gauge; she still felt that there was need for caution.

This being so, I thought it well to dismount and to creep round the bluff on hands and knees.

The moment I had advanced so far as to be able with outstretched neck to peer round the rock, I got a shock that well-nigh caused me to lose my grip upon the track, for I saw squatted on the brink of the rivulet, half-a-dozen armed men, some with the steel caps of our enemies on their heads, and a few with their head-pieces on the ground beside

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them. This group was not more than a quarter of a mile away, just beyond the hollow in the hill side through which the rivulet pattered, and even during the few seconds of my observation, one of the troopers got upon his feet and gave an order, pointing to the horses.

Before I had drawn back and risen, there was a loud shout from the slope above us. I sprang to the bridle of my pony, and had just time to swing the animal round by the head to save him from being ridden over by a trooper who had made a dash at us from the slope, shouting out the alarm to his comrades. The impetus of his descent was not to be checked in a moment. He went over the track, and tugging at the reins to pull his head round, the horse slipped badly on the slope, and went over on his side. He recovered himself in a second, but left his rider on the ground, his steel cap rolling with a clatter down among the stones.

While the man was in the act of rising, I thought I saw my chance. I picked up a piece of rock as large as a man's head and lifting it high in the air, hurled it downward. It would not have struck the man had he not shifted his head while awkwardly rising; but as it happened the broken crag met him on the left temple and crashed into his skull as an over-heavy hammer crushes a nut. The trooper fell back without a groan, and I knew that he had already been dead some seconds before the back of his head struck upon a sharp rock and broke into halves, as though for all the world it had been a walnut. I was mad at that moment, or I would never have laughed outright as I surely did, yelling out, while springing upon my pony—

"A walnut—a walnut!"

The very thought now fills me with horror, but I was mad. Mad with a man's joy on slaying his first man.

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CHAPTER XV

WE were galloping furiously back upon our track, and I was filled with a feeling of exultation such as I had never known before. I had a sense of victory, albeit that we were flying from an enemy, and we had reached poor Turlough's cabin before I regained something of my old self, and began to think by what means we might carry out our escape. The Castle was six miles in one direction and O'Brian's Tower was five in the other. Our pursuers would certainly overtake us before we should pass the second mile. With our little horses we should have to exercise some strategy.

But we were, as it so happened, in the worst situation possible for carrying out any movement that could be so termed. If we had been in the neighbourhood of some defile such as the Gap of Dunboyne, we should be comparatively safe from pursuers not amply acquainted with the twists and turns among the mighty cliffs and crags. I myself had knowledge of at least three places of perfect concealment in the Gap beyond the Tower—places where we could obtain supplies of food enough to last two people for a fortnight.

I would have given a year of my life to be within easy ride of Dunboyne. But, unhappily, I knew that there was no chance of such a transaction being perfected.

A thought struck me: we might ride round the base of the hill known as Lisnabreeny, and slip

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under the cliffs into the narrow gorge, and thence work our way unobserved into the little pine wood where we might hide until nightfall.

I pointed to the Fort of the Fairies when we had climbed to the track above the cabin, and Kathleen understood. When we got to the elevated ground I glanced back for the first time. Three troopers only were following us. The remaining three were possibly engaged over the body of their dead comrade who had acted as scout while they were eating their meal.

So I thought, while we dashed on, gradually sweeping toward Lisnabreeny, and, as we hoped, keeping our distance ahead of our pursuers.

Looking back when we had galloped another mile, I saw that only one man was after us. The other two (I hoped) had found their horses unequal to the chase and so had abandoned it.

"We are saved," I shouted. "Their horses are dead beat. When two have fallen out already, the third will not tarry long."

I blessed the contemplative mood in which I had ridden forth that day, causing me to spare my pony, so that I did not now need to slacken my pace. Another mile and we should be in the defile and within easy reach of the little wood, when we could afford to ride moderately. But meantime we had to tire out the trooper's horse.

It seemed as if we were never to reach that abrupt turn on the bluff which would bring us within view of the cliffs forming an imposing entrance to the place where we hoped for security. But at last —at last . . .

There was a glint of sunlight on something that lay prone among the grasses on the hither side of the cliffs. I reined in, and stood up in my stirrups to peer at it, for I knew that there was no flowing

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water at that place. At the same instant Kathleen pointed in another direction, whence came a different gleam. Whatever the first might be—and I confess that it seemed to me to have the shape of a steel cap—there was no room to doubt that the second came from the polished tube of a harquebuse.

We wheeled our ponies in an instant, seeing that our way was cut off in one direction, but before we had gone more than a yard or two, there was the report of musketry, and I heard the singing of a bullet close above my head, and in the next second there came a splutter of lead as another bullet struck a flat rock beside us.

We went headlong down the slope of the glen-side and every plan of escape that I had imagined a short time before, vanished from my mind. It was not left for me to make a choice of plans ; we were obliged to go whither we were driven.

Within a few minutes we were facing the long valley of the Nathir, and I saw that a grey mist was crawling up the glen from Lough Omeragh. The thought that struck me was that our only chance lay in riding straight into the depth of that mist, and then taking to the lake and swimming our ponies to one of the islands where we could hide till nightfall.

That was undoubtedly the only course open to us now, and equally beyond doubt it was the plan that offered us a good chance of saving ourselves. Glancing behind us, I saw the two troopers who had fired at us ; they were charging down the slope, not half a mile in our rear. Still, our ponies were going well, and . . .

Kathleen cried out, for between us and the lake four horsemen had come into view, riding so widely that while one man was not a quarter of a mile from the border of the lake, the fourth from him was just

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under the ascent of the slope. We saw that we were cut off. The troopers were converging to us. They would all reach us at the same moment, but that meant nothing in particular; any one of the four could do their butcher's work. I had no weapon.

I had pulled up, and we both sat watching the advance of our enemies.

"We shall be avenged—oh, yes, we shall be avenged . . . and I slew one of them—yes, I slew one of them."

That was all that I could mutter. And then I recollect that a sort of cold numbness came over me with the thought:

"*After all, death is a very unimportant matter.*"

She had her hand upon my arm, crying in my ear:

"The passage of the bog—the passage of the bog. We know it; but they cannot follow us through it."

I looked at her for some moments before I could rouse myself out of that strange stupor which had come over me. She pointed to the great bog which spread for miles through the valley. I gazed vacantly into the distance, and saw the two troopers standing their horses at the foot of the slope, ready to cut us off, should we make once more for the track.

Then the meaning of her words came to me with a flash, and with a flash we were off, heading our ponies for the passage through the bog, not more than a mile distant.

I could hear from the distinctness of the sound of the hoofs behind us, that we must be overtaken, if the race were for more than a mile; but I had a feeling we were safe. The bog passage was not wide enough for two ponies to ride abreast, and there was no sign on the firm ground to show where the passage began. It could only be ridden by one who kept his eyes upon certain landmarks that

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years of practice had made known. But the colleens of the hills are accustomed to run across by this passage with creels of turf on their backs, and think naught of the danger, being accustomed to it from childhood.

Kathleen knew the landmarks as well as I knew them, and we both made for the passage without a swerve.

And by the time we had reached the first step on it, our pursuers were so close upon us, that we heard their cries encouraging, not every man his fellow, but every man himself.

"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" cried one.

"The Lord hath delivered them into our hand," intoned another.

I solemnly declare that the men were so close that I heard the swish of a sword through the air. I glanced round for a second and saw that the six men, riding almost abreast, had actually drawn their swords, and that some were waving their weapons high above their heads. I held my pony tight reined in, and saw what happened then. I saw that one of the men had struck the passage, but the other five——

Two had plunged into the bog to the right of the passage, just where the slime is deepest, and three, being to the left, only sunk up to their withers at the first few strides. In another second two had been flung over their horses' heads, quite six yards away. The one who had struck the passage tried to wheel his horse. Horse and man toppled over, and the man received, straight on his face, the kick of one of the animals whose head had already become embedded in the bog. Men and horses, struggling, writhing, sending out furious hoofs and wild arms —faces blotted out of all recognition as faces of men

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—awful eyes, staring out of blinding slime—mouths spitting out the loathsome stuff—steel caps ringing beneath the iron hoofs that struck them—and all slowly going deeper and deeper—all being swallowed up—horses and men, inextricably mixed. They were blinded by the slime, and some fought their way onward, thinking they were returning to solid ground, and I saw two men clasped in each other's arms as they say spent swimmers will clasp each other—they were up to their necks when I turned my eyes from their struggles, and the awful part of it was that it now was all horribly silent. So enormous a thing seemed somehow to demand all the noise of battle, but though at first there were oaths and spasmodic cries, with some curious blasphemies, and an amazed shout or two, yet now the appalling struggles and grotesque contortions of men and horses were made in silence.

I turned my eyes from the two who were closed in that horrible wrestle, and saw that a trooper had been adroit enough to relieve himself of his breast-plate and back-piece, perceiving that it was the weight of their armour that was leaving him and his comrades with no chance of escape; he had managed by lying flat to get close to the firm land —already he had fought his way thither, inch by inch, his fingers digging like the claws of a wild animal into places that were moderately hard and then grabbing at tufts of coarse herbage that mostly yielded to him. While I watched, he got clear for half his body, and then he rested for some moments, with much labour of his lungs, and a plentiful spitting of slime from his mouth. Then, by a huge effort, he flung one leg up and gave his body a roll, so that he was wholly free from the bog. There he lay like a log—a grotesque and shapeless monster of slime. After a while he gained

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strength enough to sit up and wipe the filth from his eyes. The moment he had done so, he shouted out a hoarse word of encouragement to the only one of his comrades who had succeeded in keeping his head above the surface of the bog. This second man I also perceived had also the wisdom to spread out his arms and legs, which indeed is the only thing to do when one has fallen into a bog. He had eeled his way by slow degrees until I could see that he had a good chance of escaping. The one on the firm patch continued his words of encouragement, and throwing himself flat on his stomach, stretched out his hands so as to help the other when he should get within his reach. But I now saw that the other had become exhausted; he was striking out wildly and blindly. His comrade perceived this, and muttered an oath. He looked round as if in search of something by which he might reach to help the struggling wretch. I could bear the sight no longer. In a second I had unstrapped my stirrup leather and had flung it with good aim, the iron stirrup giving the needful force to my sling. If fell over the legs of the man lying on the ground, and he gave a shout of satisfaction, In a second he was leaning over the bog as far as he dared, trying to throw the stirrup within the reach of the wild clutching hands out there. He flung it half a dozen times, and straight enough, though it never got within their reach, and he blasphemed horribly at every miss. Suddenly the iron stirrup went as clean over one of the man's hands as a well-aimed iron quoit goes over the pin on the ground. The hand grasped it, and with a curse of thankfulness at his success, the man began hauling the wretch toward him.

Then, while I watched breathlessly the man being hauled inch by inch to safety, a black figure seemed

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to spring up from the bog itself upon the man who was at the leather—I saw the glint of steel—once—twice—thrice. The arm holding the leather fell limp, and the man's head lay flat on the slime, and at the same instant the hand that was gripping the iron stirrup went deep down.

It was Father Mahony who stood over the body of the man whom he had stabbed thrice with a dagger.

It was a dreadful thing to do ; I felt that at the moment when I saw it done, but now I feel assured that the priest's act saved us. If those two men had survived, their first act would have been to give us up to the bog—that is, unless they were by nature very different from their comrades,, who knew neither mercy nor gratitude.

And then the priest and I watched the end of the grim tragedy.

It was not long in coming. The two who had been in each other's arms had well-nigh disappeared. Only one arm out of their four still stood up from the surface, and went swaying stiffly about with the contortions of the hidden bodies ; at last it gave a spasmodic wave, which had the ghastly semblance to the courteous arm-wave which one gives when parting from a friend, and then it went under, splashing the surface of the ooze right and left. The man who had been so nearly saved had disappeared, but all the surface above where he sank was being shaken as though it were boiling beneath, and here and there a black bubble arose. Then suddenly there shot out a man's hand still holding the iron stirrup.

It looked as if it were offering it to me, and it had the likeness to the design of a crest—that hand gripping an iron stirrup. It sunk very slowly from our sight.

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CHAPTER XVI

FATHER MAHONY stood with folded arms by the black body of the man whom he had slain. I turned, with a certain indrawing of the breath which one has with a sense of relief from a great strain, to where Kathleen had been. She was there no longer. I had not looked round once in her direction while that horrible scene of expiation had been enacted, as if the soil of Ireland had been a living thing hungering to be avenged upon its oppressors.

For a short time I was amazed with fear, so great an impression had the thing I had witnessed upon me. I thought of the girl being swallowed up by a shocking accident due to my want of caution. But, looking across the far breadth of the bog, I could see her on the firm ground at the other end of the passage. She had dismounted, and was standing with her face down to her saddle.

Father Mahony was looking down at the body at his feet.

"Murderer!" he said. "Murderer of women and children—slayer of God's priests, thou hast been slain by one of them. 'Twas the thought of a girl that lured thee to thy doom—the knife of a priest that let out thy soul to mingle with the other slime of the pit."

(Still he did not touch the body with his foot.)

Marvelling greatly how it was he knew that the suggestion to escape by the passage of the bog had

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come from Kathleen, I led my pony to the only broad part of the passage, and, wheeling him there, went slowly with the bridle over my arm to the place where Father Mahony stood looking down at the dead man.

I, too, stood looking at the dead man.

There was a long silence— a silence that somehow seemed like a prayer for those who had entered the Long Silence.

It was broken by the sounds that fell from a flock of wild geese flying from Lough Omeragh, and once again I thought of the legend, told to me by old Gran, that the souls of the newly-dead take the form of those birds. I raised my eyes and counted nine birds.

Seven troopers and the poor man whom they had hanged, I thought. That made eight.

But the ninth? . . .

"I saw this carrion at Drogheda," said Father Mahony—and still he did not lift his foot against the body. "He was a zealous corporal, who called himself 'Sword-of-the-Spirit Appleyard.' He was the blasphemous wretch who ran with a torch to the sanctuary whither the women and the children had been sent for safety. That was the hand which fired the wood—that black hand, foul in the sight of the Most High by that deed, as it is foul by the slime of that pit into which he fell. I heard the shrieks of the women and the pitiful cry of the children. Some they threw out of the windows, and this was the monster who ordered his men to close up their ranks and spit the infants in mid-air on their swords. And now his soul burns in the Pit of Burning, while their faces look upon the the face of the King in His Glory, and palms are in their hands. Thank God, who led me hither to stab him to the death! Thank God, who chose me, unworthy though I be, to

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be His sword, and to avenge the death of His saints!"

And then all at once I found who was the ninth.

"This was the man who murdered old Turlough," said I, "and this was the man who murdered my brother Harry."

He turned to me and a look of surprise and inquiry was on his face.

"I tell you the truth," said I. "An hour ago I entered Turlough's cabin to find the poor old man hanging lifeless from the beam, and albeit that I have not yet seen my brother's body, yet certain am I that the reason why he failed to return to us was his meeting with the band of marauders led by that man. What pity would they have for him? Yes, they slew him as they would have slain us, and mayhap flung the body into the tarn."

"And you would have saved him and the one whom he sought to draw from the slough?" said he.

"'Twas in a moment of weakness," said I; "and besides at that time I did not know that he had slain my brother."

"And you have proofs of it since?"

"'Twas the flock of wild geese—you heard them calling. I accounted for eight of them. The ninth set me thinking."

The priest smiled—but solemnly rather than grimly.

"Son Walter, have you found any one who saw Harry as you saw him?" he asked.

"None," I replied, "unless he reached O'Brian's Tower and is still lodged there."

"The girl hath told you nought?"

"We had no time for converse. She came upon me when I was in the cabin. Thank heaven that I was able to save her from seeing all that met my eyes."

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"She is on the passage of the bog now, and will be beside us presently," said the priest, glancing to where Kathleen could be seen—a slow and solitary figure mounted on her pony on her way across the morass. "Son Walter, 'twere best not to speak the name of your brother to her at this time. Prithee, leave me to discover if our Harry hath been at O'Brian's Tower?"

"If he hath not been thither, it was because he was set upon by an enemy and slain on the way," said I.

We spoke no more at that time, for Kathleen was at hand. I went to her side, and looked into her face.

"Dear Kathleen," I said, "we are saved—by the mercy of heaven."

"Ay," she said; "ay, but at what a dread sacrifice of human life!"

I felt that I could not but allow that there had been a sacrifice of human life; at the same time I could not but feel that we were worth it. The more I looked at Kathleen the more convinced was I that in this matter the end justified the means.

I refrained, however, from reminding her that it was she who had suggested our riding for the passage of the bog.

"Yes," said the priest, "there has been a considerable sacrifice of inhuman life. You should thank heaven for that, daughter."

She had suddenly become aware of the dead body lying a few yards away. She started, looking at it with horror in her eyes.

"How was he killed?" she asked. "Having reached the hard ground, he must still have been living."

"'Twas God who slew that monster of the slime," replied the priest. "To heaven be the glory! Who

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am I that I should boast of doing a deed which would place me high above my fellows? I am but clay—a worm of the clay; but God carries out His Divine Will in a mysterious way. He chooses the weak ones of the earth to confound the wise. Give thanks unto Him, daughter, for snatching you from the death which so many of your poor sisters suffered." Then he turned to me, saying:

"Come, Walter, lend me your hands to commit that thing to its own element—slime to slime. If allowed to lie here, he may be the means of preventing the death of some of his comrades, who may be delivered into our hands at this place."

When I stooped down I found that I could scarce stir the body, for, though the two pieces of armour which he had discarded were doubtless heavy, yet his garments had become so saturated with the thick elements of the bog they had become weighty (as it seemed) as lead itself.

I did not look to see if it were so, but I know well that Kathleen was standing at the further side of her pony while we swung the thing with the limp pendulous arms, between us, yet only contrived to send it a few yards into the gulf that opened its mouth for its prey.

The body struck the surface head foremost, so that the splash of the slime was not so great as I had looked for it to be.

"And so Corporal Sword-of-the-Spirit Appleyard joins his comrades," said the priest, wiping his hands carefully with a kerchief, which he afterward flung into the bog.

"I think that I would do well to go home now," said Kathleen, gently. "Walter, I owe my safety to you. If you had not been at poor Turlough's cabin I doubt not that I should now be in the hands of those hapless wretches."

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"Nay," said Father Mahony, "you would now be lying among the heather with your throat cut, or, it may be, you would be smouldering among the ashes of Turlough's cabin. They were greatly given to the burning of maidens in cabins as well as in churches. But there were seven of the troop," he added; "we have only account of six?"

"What, he hath not told you of his bravery?" cried the girl, with an eagerness such as she had not up to that moment shown. "Oh, 'twas that stroke that saved us. The scout who was placed on the hill while the others were eating, he charged us from above and we should have been swept off the face of the earth but for Walter's bravery. He had nought for our defence but the piece of crag at our feet. It crushed the man's skull as if it had been a scallop-shell—I heard the sound, just like to the crushing of a scallop-shell when one treads on it on a dry rock."

I was amazed beyond measure to see that her eyes were gleaming while she told the story in rapid phrases.

And there had I been hoping that when we should be alone and able to speak together face to face, she would listen to the defence I was ready to offer her for that deed, which I thought she would think of with horror.

I was amazed, and dumb.

Father Mahony smiled, looking from one to the other.

"The first man that ever killed a man to save a woman from his clutches was the first hero," said he. "Ay, in very truth, child, though a professed man of peace, Walter hath still a strain that goes to the figure of a hero in the eyes of a woman. This David slingeth a crag shrewdly at the nearest Goliath. How came it, girl, that you were riding

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alone so far from home in these times of trouble?"

"Have I not always ridden without an escort?" said she. "Who could have known that there was danger so close at hand?"

"Albeit that more than a se'nnight hath passed since the warning was sent forth," said he. "Alas! when will the Irish learn to be prepared for the worst instead of the best? What, is't possible that within the week you have had no visitors at the Tower to implore you to take heed lest danger overtake you?"

"We have had no visitors," she replied.

"What, have you seen no one who came to you with a story of an escape?"

"I have seen no one. Who is it that hath escaped from Cromwell's men except yourself, Father?" she cried.

"Alas!" he said. "I am showing myself to be very Irish, for I had hopes for the best. I thought it was possible that some poor wretch might have escaped and wandered hither to the uttermost limits of this cage for captives which Ireland hath become. Daughter, mount your pony; Walter will ride with you to O'Brian's Tower, and return to the Castle before noon to-morrow. Farewell! God save our dear country Ireland!"

It was with a sad heart that I mounted my pony and rode slowly along the track by the side of Kathleen. I knew that I had great good reason to feel thankful to heaven for having snatched us, almost by a miracle, from a shocking death; but my heart was full of the thought that now I knew the worst that could be known. Harry had indeed been one of the first victims of that band of assassins from whom we had escaped. What room was there left for me to doubt that, when on his way to O'Brian's Tower on the night when we had talked together, he

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had been set upon and slain by that band which had come to devastate our land? He had left me in the force of that determination of his not to sleep under his father's roof until he had kissed the hand of the maiden whose devout lover he was; but alas! here was I riding through the long valley in this tristful twilight, by the side of the maiden, and she all unknowing that he had given up his life sooner than violate the spirit of a true lover's devotion!

How could I be other than sad at that time?

Our poor ponies had done us good service that day, and so we did not urge them onward. And this pace was in keeping with the still hour and the grey light; and be sure that my reflections were in sympathy with all that was of melancholy.

I made but a poor companion for Kathleen, and I knew it. Once or twice she asked of me why I felt heavy; and bade me not reproach myself for that sacrifice of life which she had so deplored. She held that I should not be too severe upon myself, or charge myself with what had happened.

"After all, only one blow was struck by you," she said, "and if you had not struck that blow, or had failed to strike it faithfully what should our state have been? 'Twas Father Mahony who struck the one cruel blow, and he is a priest, and thus more capable than either of us of saying if it were justified or not. You would not have stabbed a man who was trying to save the life of another man, Walter."

I told her that I would not have the courage. I had always let the rats out of the trap in which they were caught in the kitchen, which was a very foolish thing to do. Father Mahony had acted aright, I assured her. He had had his experience of the fellow whom he had stabbed, and knew him for a foul murderer. He was the head of the band of assassins and, consequently, should be held liable

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for the murder of our old friend Turlough. That of itself was a sufficient reason why he should not be allowed to live.

Moreover, had he been granted his life he would not have hesitated for a moment to fling us into the bog. He was not the man to do all that he had done at Drogheda and elsewhere, and then to pause over such a trifle as our murder would seem to be in his eyes.

She shook her head, as women will do, being, as people say, impressionable rather than reasonable; and 'tis somehow the impressionable woman who is beloved rather than the one who has reason on her side; which indicates, I suppose, that men having once been savages, cannot, if healthy, rid themselves of the fondness for that which is directed by instinct and not in accordance with the rules of logic.

So we went slowly through the long shallow way beside the bogland. The twilight was grey and misty, and over the ridge of Craig Darragh the slender crescent of the young moon was shining, clear and sharp as any sickle in harvest time. Almost within the clasp of its two horns a single brilliant star was standing more steadfast than anything in heaven.

I could not tell Kathleen the truth about her lover. It would be too cruel to add this pitiful tale to the burden of her experiences of the day. And yet I knew that she would have to be told some time. It was this thought that made me feel sadder than the autumn twilight.

And, indeed, I think that, looking at matters as I did, I did well to be melancholy; for there was that beautiful creature beside me cut off from all hope of being happy with the one whom she loved, and here was I, who loved her with all my soul, and who, therefore, could never entertain the thought of loving

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another—here was I, I say, cut off from all hope of ever being able to tell her what was in my heart. If I could not be a traitor to my brother when he was alive, how could I act differently now that he was dead? How could I be base enough to make the attempt to take his place in her heart even if that were possible? For I thought of love then as I have always thought of it, as something that should be cherished quite irrespective of the existence of a living object of affection, and wholly without regard to the possibility of reward. If Kathleen loved Harry when he was beside her, I was assured that she would not cease to love him even though she knew that she would never see his face again on earth.

But withal, I was very human and very unhappy during that long slow journey to O'Brian's Tower. The moon had now sunk beneath the ridge of the hills and her steadfast star had followed her before we came upon the great Tower at the entrance to the second valley, and saw the lights gleaming red as a demon's eye out through the narrow windows of that dark mass of masonry.

The night was very black as our ponies crawled into the court-yard. I threw myself from my saddle and hastened to help Kathleen to dismount. She put a hand upon each of my shoulders and wearily let them rest there for some moments. Then she gave a sigh—the faintest sigh possible to imagine—a sigh that suggested (somehow) the shadow of a butterfly crossing a rosebud—and then I became strangely aware of her face approaching mine—the night was so dark that I could not see it—and the next moment her lips were upon mine.

And the most curious part of the whole matter was that I felt not in the least surprised. It actually seemed to me as if I had been waiting for

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that kiss of her (so strange and disordering an effect the overstrain of such incidents as we had experienced may have upon a man).

Our lips hung together for more than an instant, and then she slid into my arms from her saddle, and I held her very close to me, feeling the beating of her heart, and not knowing whether it was her heart or mine that was beating so tumultuously—so rapturously.

"Sweet sister," I whispered—and now I knew that I was trying my best to quiet the twitch which I had from my conscience for what might easily be construed, I admit, into a lover's impulse. "Sweet sister, I thank God that we have gone through this day side by side."

"And I, too, thank God, dear, dear brother," she said, and then she gave a laugh and pulled me by the ear very pleasantly.

Afterward, when I came to think over the matter, it seemed to me that this was the strangest of all the happening, in the darkness, but at the time it did not appear to me to be at all extraordinary. (So dulled may become one's power of distinguishing between nice points when one's body is exhausted.)

And when I heard her laugh I laughed also—yes, queerly. She ran to the postern, as it seemed, quite gaily, in spite of the dreadful day through which she had passed and her narrow escape from death.

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CHAPTER XVII

THERE was the Tower standing open to all comers—the postern flung wide in the true Irish spirit of hospitality, of which the poet Spenser wrote in such graceful appreciation. There was the stronghold of the O'Brians, supposed to be the guardian of the Gap, lying most hospitably open for friend or enemy to enter; and this, too, after many warnings had been given of the intentions of Cromwell to overrun even the Western counties, and after O'Brian himself had joined with my father in urging upon our neighbours to prepare to make a solid resistance to the advance of the usurper!

By dint of shouting and bell-hauling I succeeded in arousing some of the servants to lead the ponies to the stables. When I entered the hall I found Kathleen telling her father and Madam O'Brian —the wife of the chief is styled in English "Madam" —some of the happenings of the day. I fear that she had been over generous in her references to the part which I had played, for O'Brian and Madam greeted me in the exaggerated Irish style, with hand-shakings and loud cries of "the preserver of our child!" "the bravest lad that lives!" "the boy that saved Ireland!" and other expressions of the fancy, embarrassing to have hurled at one who knows the exact measure of what he has done. I had killed one man—that was the sum of my achievements. For the rest, I had done no more than ride by the side of Kathleen, for she it was, as I tried to

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explain, who had suggested making for the passage of the bog, and 'twas this scheme that proved the destruction of our enemies.

All that I could say was of no avail to stem the torrent of gratitude with which I was assailed, and which only came to an end when Madam O'Brian had thrown herself into my arms. As she was a large woman, who always was apparelled in velvet robes embroidered with gold (sometimes a trifle frayed), her embrace completed my overwhelming.

And we must have a bowl before supper—that was the decision of O'Brian. After all that we had gone through, and after the entire annihilation (the phrase was his) of the army of Cromwell in the County of Clare, it was no more than the least generous man in the land would prescribe as befitting the occasion. So—after much shouting and more bell-ringing—the great silver bowl was brought, overflowing with a mixture the ingredients of which remained a family secret of the O'Brian; but assuredly the foundation of the drink was our national uisque, and we all drank of it in turn.

I saw that O'Brian was preparing himself for a speech, and I knew that if I were to defer saying what I had on my mind, I might not have another chance of ridding myself of it, so before he had begun to clear his throat, I said—

"We have succeeded in doing wonders to-day, O'Brian, but give me leave to say that it would be madness for us to expect such fortune to attend us another time. There was, you know, great risk in Kathleen's riding out alone to-day, and that too after the warning we got."

"Walter, man, can you think that if we had dreamt that there was the least likelihood of those rapscallions being in the neighbourhood we would have let her go?" cried O'Brian. "Never, my

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boy, never! In our love for our daughter and our tender regard for her safety we yield to none. But, man alive, who could have fancied that those troopers should be lying in wait like grey wolves for the innocent lamb? Walter, you are not the boy to entertain so base a thought as that we would have let her go forth if we had foreseen the danger."

"Of course no such thought could come to me," I said. "But do not you think that some little precaution is needful for your own protection and for the safety of the Tower?"

"Ah, would to heaven that I had followed your father's example last year and had fortified this place!" said O'Brian. "But who could ever have thought that the time would come when such a measure was necessary? Think of all that has happened, my boy—the murder of the King, the accession of the thrice accursed Cromwell to power, the brutal invasion of our beloved country—ah, sir, who could have foreseen all this?"

"Very few," said I, shaking my head. "Very few; but my father was among the few, and the consequence is that we could resist a six months' siege."

"But you don't believe that it will come, Walter?" cried Madam O'Brian with trepidation in her tone. "Oh, if it came to a question of siege I'm afraid that we couldn't hold out longer than a week."

"Don't trouble yourself, my dear; it will never come to that," said her husband, reassuringly. "Besides, haven't we just heard tidings that the force sent hither by Cromwell has been swept out of existence?"

"But there is no reason why another body of six men might not make their way hither," said I, "and

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you know as well as I do, O'Brian, that such a force would be sufficient to capture this tower to-night, considering that all they would have to do would be to walk in through the open postern. You are too hospitable, entirely, sir."

"What?" he cried. "You are not after telling me that the postern was open?"

I could see that his surprise and indignation were feigned. He knew as well as I did that the postern was open; that postern had been open for three hundred years, because it was nobody's business to see that it was closed.

"I assure you," said I, humouring him, "that an hundred men could have entered by that postern when I entered. There was no porter, to say nothing of a sentinel."

"The thing is a shame and a scandal!" cried O'Brian. "I'll make an example of them that are accountable for this neglect. I'll teach them that I'm in earnest, the rapscallions!"

He went to the door and shouted out for Shane and Thady and Patsy and Conn Dhu and Phelim Oge. In the silence that followed we could hear the faint sounds of distant music, and then a far-off sound of singing, as faintly hoarse as the sound of the sea heard through the mist.

"'Tis a party the boys are having," said Madam. "Phelim became a father last night—that's what's happening—nothing more."

"And 'tis enough, Madam, give me leave to tell you that," cried O'Brian. "What, shall O'Brian's Tower be imperilled because a good-for-nothing shaughraun like Phelim adds paternity to his long catalogue of crime? I'll settle with my new-fangled father, so I will."

"Ah, now, what will you do with him, O'Brian?" asked Madam.

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"I'll shoot him with my own hand, Madam, that's what I'll do with your pattern of paternity," roared O'Brian.

We all laughed, knowing perfectly well that no command had ever been issued. I was sure that O'Brian himself was aware of the fact that we knew of this, or he never would have made so powerful an effort to show his indignation. I do not believe that any combination of circumstances ever makes a man so indignant as O'Brian pretended to be.

"You laugh—you laugh!" he cried. "Let me tell you that it would be more appropriate to the situation if you were to weep—if you were to mingle your tears with the bitter ones that Erin is shedding at this moment beneath the heel of the invader. I'll have it out with Phelim on this spot! A father indeed! By the powers, you'd fancy that there never had been a father in the world before."

He strode out of the hall and battered on the steel shield which hung outside, making a jangling thunder, which could be heard half way down the valley. This system saved a deal of bell-ringing in the Tower, and was much more effective—yes, if persevered in.

O'Brian persevered, and in the course of a few minutes three or four of his retainers made their appearance at the foot of the great hall, and every man, save one, was in the act of getting his arms into the sleeves of his coat. The odd man had completed his toilet, only in the excitement of the moment he had pulled on his coat with the back seam in front of him.

"You're a pretty set of omadhauns!" said O'Brian. "Did never you hear tell of Nero, the Emperor of Rome, where the Pope lives, and how he danced an Irish jig and played the tune on his violin at the same time, while the city was going

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to blazes beneath his feet? Well, it's Neros that all of ye be here—with your jigs galore and lashings of drink, I'll be bound, and all the time the enemy at our very doors. If it was a wake there'd be some excuse for your ill-timed merriment, but 'tis not a wake it is, but just the opposite. Where's Phelim?"

"He's tuk to the flure, your honour," said one of the smiling servants, in very good English.

"And who is opposite to him?" inquired His Honour, in quite an interested way.

"'Tis Molly Malony herself, your honour," replied three of the retainers.

"She's the best dancer in the county of Clare," said O'Brian. "Well, I'll not shoot him dead until he has danced the jig, but I'll do it the first spare moment I have, you can tell him that."

"Your honour will be saved the thrubble of it, for 'tis Molly Malony that'll kill him entirely before he leaves the flure," said one of the men.

"I'll let no man, woman, or child—not even Phelim's—take the law into their own hands here," cried the Chief. "'Twas Phelim Oge that I gave the charge of the postern to, and he neglected his duty. That's why I'll shoot him dead, and, moreover, I'll do it every time he repeats the offence. Now look and hear, Conn Dhu, I give the postern into your charge. The moment that the dance in the kitchen is over you come to your post at the postern, and you don't leave it without further orders. Moreover, if any man, woman, or child comes to that postern, 'tis your charge to keep them at the outside of it until they prove themselves friendly. 'Tis in earnest that I am this day, and if you desert your post you'll be shot without trial and before you can invent an excuse. Now be off with you."

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The fellows cried, "Long life to your honour!" "The heavens be your bed!" "May your honour wake in glory!" and expressed many other visionary wishes, but they did not need to be told a second time to go back to the kitchens.

O'Brian turned to me with a face that was droll by reason of its gravity.

"Poor devils!" said he, "'tis not much in the way of diversion they get from morning to night. We can't be hard on them, or they'll get discouraged. Oh, my children, 'tis not in my heart to be hard on my bitterest enemy this night when I see you safe and sound before me."

I went to the room which I was used to occupy when sleeping, as I sometimes did long ago, at O'Brian's Tower, to prepare for supper. And before I reached the apartment my melancholy had returned.

How could any one be present at such a scene as I had witnessed and not feel melancholy? Warning after warning had been sent round the neighbourhood relative to the designs of the enemy; but instead of making preparations for resistance, here were the retainers at an important post, dancing and making merry as if there was nothing to be afraid of. Drogheda had recently been put to the sword, and the chances were that Wexford would within a week or two be devastated, and if Clonmel were to fall and Limerick to be invested, the whole of the island would inevitably be under the heel of Cromwell; and yet . . . I could hear the sounds of the fiddle scraping out the liveliest of jigs, and the whoops of the onlookers encouraging the dancers to renewed efforts.

I would not have described the scene that followed our entrance to the great hall but for the fact that it seemed to me to be so nearly typical of Ireland and the Irish; that a consideration of it may be of help to

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such persons as are anxious to understand how our island has always been the scene of disaster. The people know no middle course between the blackness of tragedy and the brightness of comedy. The stolid English, who in a light moment undertook the governing of a people who had certainly shown every disqualification for governing themselves, have never taken a step in the direction of understanding the people of Ireland. They have only despised them, and that is a bad beginning to make on the road leading to a good understanding. Ireland has ever been regarded by the Englishmen of State as the crucible into which the alchemist puts his ingredients, mixing them up together and then lighting the hottest fire beneath that he can build. He is greatly chagrined when he finds that the result is not the philosopher's stone, but a very noisome residuum, offensive to the nostrils, and without form or system. And when he has failed, another comes forward, cleans out the crucible, and fills it with a new set of the nostrums of the political druggist, hoping for the best, but acting with an unreasonableness that must lead only to the worst. This braying of the drugs in the mortar and flinging the ill-considered mixture into the crucible the English Minister of State terms—when he has pulled the bellows and sent the flames roaring in every direction ——a settlement.

And when I descended to the great hall to partake of supper, Kathleen and I, who had passed the day in a somewhat tragic fashion, ended it in a spirit of unmitigated comedy, for O'Brian was in his most jocular vein, and when this was so, and when, moreover, it was supplemented by a dance at the foot of the hall between the two most untiring of jig-makers in the county, no one near him could be other than merry. You see, Kathleen and I had also the Irish

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temperament, though mayhap in different degrees, and before Phelim Oge and Molly Malony had tired each other out, we were as merry as though we had not, a few hours before, been flying for our lives—as though we had not witnessed the loathsome death of seven men, five in the slime of the bog, one with three dagger wounds in his side, and one with his brains scattered over the heather beneath the impact of the crag which I had dashed upon him.

Once Kathleen during supper playfully called me David and referred to our enemy as Goliath, and I laughed, not without something of vain-glory and a huge desire to boast, which I with difficulty repressed. O'Brian, then, with inimitable gravity, professed an ardent desire to become more amply instructed upon the precepts and professions of the Friends of the Truth, recently termed by a ribald magistrate, Quakers. He was certainly fortunate, he said, in having at hand for this purpose, so firm an adherent to these principles and so practical an exponent of their value in the hour of need.

O'Brian was a master in point of dexterity when he had a jest to toss about before any one, and in spite of the weary day which Kathleen and I had gone through, midnight came before we separated, and we were feeling light-hearted to the end.

Only as I passed the postern and found the door, as usual, wide open and with no sign of a sentinel near, did I have a qualm.

Now and again such an admonition reminded me that I had no right to think of myself as Irish. Only three generations back the Fawcetts were English squires living on their estates, very thoughtful for the October brew of their small ale, and taking care to keep their doors shut fast o'nights.

There never yet was a Fawcett who so far forgot himself as to gain a reputation for jesting.

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Perhaps that was why the Queen, with her accustomed sagacity, was convinced that we should make excellent undertakers.

And she was right. Among the ingredients of the melting pot the Fawcetts represented the lead, which is the first to yield to the influence of the fire, and never ceases to be a useful metal, albeit lacking in the spring of steel, the glitter of silver, and the boldness of brass. But we were useful—especially when cast into bullets—and heavy.

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CHAPTER XVIII

I COULD not leave O'Brian's Tower without making at least some attempt to do for this place what I had tried—with but indifferent success—to do for Castle Omeragh. I found that most of the muskets, except those used in the chase, had become rusty, and that their locks were of the old form, and not the more recent wheel locks. There was a sufficiency of gunpowder, but absolutely no matches, and very little tow to make them withal. As for the bullets, O'Brian affirmed that he had two ton somewhere, but the Lord only knew where they were hid.

It took us half the day finding those bullets, and when found, it was apparent that they were not cast for barrels bored like those of the muskets in the armoury. O'Brian said he would give orders for them to be recast on the morrow, but knowing as I did that his morrows represented an indefinite period in chronology, I set to work, with great unkindness, over the melting cauldron in the kitchen, and pressed into my service half a dozen of the most noted idlers among the family retainers. Within the space of a couple of hours I had recast as many bullets as would serve to slaughter a complete regiment—provided that they were truly aimed. I had to brave the cook in this work, but I did so fearlessly (you see the woman was not my cook). When she inquired, with a spit in one hand and a saucepan in the other, where I meant her to

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cook the dinner, seeing that I and my rapscallions (they were rapscallions, but not mine) had taken up all the fire space with our cauldrons and bullet moulds and what not, I ventured to suggest to her where there was another fire, always ready for the accommodation of such as she, and bade her go thither and cook her dinner. She replied with force, and not having at hand stronger words than hers, I was careless enough to spill a mouldful of lead with a sudden spatter upon the floor, not so far from her huge bare feet. The molten lead spattered and scattered freely. . . .

I finished casting those bullets.

Entreating O'Brian to place a sentinel on the roof, and to keep the man who was now in control of the postern, at his post, I left for home in the evening.

I may mention that I did not find it necessary to call Kathleen by the endearing name of sister again, nor, apparently, did she feel that anything in particular would be gained by giving my right ear such a pretty twitch as she had given my left, immediately after calling me " dear brother " (with a laugh).

But I allow that the thought of that twitch caused me to have more than one twinge of conscience as I recalled the incidents of our dismounting in the darkness of the previous evening. It was only after I had had a straight gallop across the flat lands that I succeeded in coaxing off my conscience, so to speak, so that I might get to the brotherly standpoint from which I hoped to view the transaction in the future.

I wondered if I was justified in keeping from Kathleen the knowledge which I had, by inference, acquired regarding Harry. I now and again felt that I should have told her all that I knew; but, indeed, what was in my mind was that the poor

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girl had gone through so much already during the day that it would be more than cruel to add to her burden. "Let her have at least one night," I said to myself; and thus it was that I lent myself to her father's mood, and we had gone to our beds to sleep, and not to lie awake thinking that we were for evermore shut out from all happiness in the future.

I met Father Mahony before reaching the Castle. He had come forth to meet me, he said, this being the hour at which he took the air, and he agreed with me that there was no need for Kathleen to know what my fears were respecting my brother. He advised me also to refrain from communicating my fears to my father.

"'Tis not as if you had good tidings to tell him," said he. "Good tidings cannot be told too soon, but evil scarce need be narrated; they tell themselves all too soon."

I agreed with him, and then we talked of the events of the day before. He told me that he had been concealed in a safe place when the troopers had pursued us, and seeing us make for the passage of the bog, he had been assured of the result, and had followed swiftly in order to frustrate any attempt that the Roundheads might make to escape, or (he confessed it frankly) any attempt that we might, in our "thoughtless humanity" (that was his phrase), make to rescue them from the just vengeance of the land which they had outraged by their cruelties.

"I have the same poniard for another and even blacker wretch than the one whose soul I sent to the Pit yestreen," said he. "I had marvelled at the knowledge of the region shown by Corporal Sword-of-the-Spirit Appleyard yesterday, and I felt convinced that it had been imparted to him by some traitor among us. How otherwise could the men

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have been able to cut you off when you made for the Gap ? "

" I gave them credit for finding out the tracks for themselves, assuming that they had been for some days among the mountains," said I.

" There was no need for them to be at so great pains," said he. " There is always some traitor who is ready to sell his country and his own soul thrown into the bargain. Knowing this, by bitter experience of our Irish wars, I was at the trouble to ransack our corporal's pouch—you did not see me—you were too anxious for the safety of O'Brian's daughter in re-crossing the passage of the bog to be able to note aught but the stepping of her pony."

" I saw nothing of your act, indeed," said I. " But what found you ? "

" I found his commission, instructing him to spare none, old or young, in the land, and, with this document, another giving in detail the tracks and the passes by which Castle Omeragh and O'Brian's Tower may be approached. A map of an enemy's country is equal in value to the finest regiment of targeteers or the heaviest troop of dragoons, and of such a map our good corporal had become possessed. It hath passed into my possession now, for I judged that Monsieur le Caporal hath no further need for it."

" Who was the wretch that betrayed us ? "

" I cannot yet tell ; but I suspect two or three of our friends, and I doubt not that I shall be able to assure myself of him before long."

I was overwhelmed with indignation. The reflection that there was living among us—perhaps in intimate association with us—some one who had shown his desire to betray us into the hands of the most remorseless enemy that Ireland had ever known, overcame me, so that I could only stand

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there beside Father Mahony uttering frantic curses against the wretch.

"Nay," said the priest, laying his hand upon my arm. "Nay, there is no need to curse him. Take my word for it, the Almighty doth not need any of His creatures to remind Him that a betrayer of friends deserves the doom of Iscariot. Alas! that is in every Irish enterprise—whether we are striking for the freedom that is our heritage, or repelling the attack of an invader, there is ever one who has his eyes set upon the thirty pieces of silver! But he finds one day that to have for his enemy the God of heaven and earth is to have made a bad bargain with the devil."

He said no more on this subject; only he bade me be cautious in my dealings with every one whom I might meet, and to tell no one what we had done or what we hoped to do. Indeed, he thought that it would not be well for us even to mention the fact of our having lured the troopers to their doom in the bog. Let those who had sent the men to carry on their brutal business among us be led to assume that they were surpassing their masters in their monstrous cruelties, and, if they so desired, despatch as many more to supplement their efforts. If we could only contrive to kill them by sevens, we should have good grounds for hoping one day to be free of them altogether.

And then he gave me the tidings which he had just received, that Ireland would not be left without help in her hour of sorest need. He had good reason to believe that the Duke of Lorraine was gathering together an army which he hoped to send in his ships and those of Prince Rupert up the estuary of the Shannon, and land at Limerick before the usurper should be recovered from the effects of his sieges of Wexford and Waterford.

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This was, of course, good news, though I confessed to him that it would please me better to hear that our countrymen had succeeded in overwhelming our enemy without the need of foreign help.

"Then I will name two names of Irishmen in your ears, who have become our country's hope in this dark hour," said the priest. "You have heard of Colonel Kelly, of Aghraan, in the county of Galway?"

"Who hath not heard of him?" I cried, recalling at the mention of his name all that I had heard of that gallant Commander of Horse, who had been Ormond's finest soldier, and was so worshipped by his men that when he went to Spain, after the murder of King Charles, two thousand of them joined him in exile. "Yes, I have heard of Colonel Kelly; hath any one heard from him?"

"He hath left Spain and is now in France," said the priest. "It is known that he hath placed his services and his men at the disposal of the King of France, and the King of England, should they join in an enterprise against Cromwell."

"That is good news indeed," I cried. "Yes—if France do not make an attempt to get the best of the bargain in the end. What says Cardinal Mazarin in the matter? Is not his voice one to make itself heard, should such trafficking be afoot?"

The priest shook his head.

"I have heard nothing about the attitude of the Cardinal," he said.

"And it seems to me that 'twere as vain to count on the action of France without first knowing what the Cardinal thinks as it would be to count on a ship's movements before learning if the rudder has been shipped. Is not Cardinal Mazarin the rudder of France just now?"

"The rudder of France and of every Christian

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country, not excepting Ireland, is the true Church, son Walter," said the priest, with grave dignity.

"Then the Cardinal is the mariner's hand, that moves the helm and so alters the course of the ship," said I. "But enough of Mazarin. His was not surely the second of the two names which you said you had for my ears—Mazarin is not an Irish name."

"The second name is the name of a soldier—Hugh Duff O'Neill."

"Ah, that is the name of a soldier and an Irishman—the greatest name in Ulster is O'Neill, and Hugh Duff, the nephew of Owen Roe, is the greatest of the O'Neills."

"He is the greatest soldier in Ireland. If he had only got his will and been in Drogheda, the country would not be mourning to-day. O'Neill is on his way to strengthen Clonmel, and if Clonmel is taken Limerick still remains, and, after Limerick, Kilkenny and Galway. Those are the words of General Hugh Duff O'Neill."

"They are the words of a soldier and an Irishman. If O'Neill buckles on his sword the campaign of Cromwell for the resettlement of Ireland will be a long one."

"Only the presence of a traitor to our cause will prevent it from being triumphant. We must watch for the traitors, son Walter."

That was the end of our conversation for the time being; and, indeed, when I began to consider the tidings which Father Mahony said had been conveyed to him—he never told me by what means he got his tidings—I was not so hopeless as I had been when I set out from O'Brian's Tower. It was quite possible that Colonel Kelly and his army of two thousand men, who had gone first to Spain and then to France, might be able, even if they did not suc-

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ceed in obtaining the active co-operation of France, to borrow ships and effect a landing at Limerick. They were said to have been the flower of Ormond's army, and if they had only returned to Ireland before Cromwell's invasion, the story of Drogheda might have been very different. The winter was approaching, and every incident of the campaign weakened to no small extent the invading army, so that, with a prolonged defence of Wexford and Clonmel, to say nothing of the falling back upon such strong cities as Limerick, Kilkenny, and Galway, the effect of the landing of two thousand fresh soldiers, all of whom were veterans, on the Irish side, might actually mean triumph.

I felt convinced the longer I thought over the matter, that the landing of Colonel Kelly and his regiment would mean the triumph of the Irish—if only they would come. I was never very sanguine about their coming.

But of the resolution and courage of the Ulster General Hugh Duff O'Neill there could be no doubt. I had often heard of him and of the extraordinary influence which he had over his men. It was said that they would follow him anywhere, and he never gave them a chance to do aught except follow him, for he was ever the foremost in action, and headed every charge. Above all, he had the reputation, which is the most valuable that a leader can acquire, of bearing a charmed life. The man who has a name for luck is the man who will be followed to the death by an Irish army; and I was a good enough Irishman to be carried away by the mere feeling; for several times during this night, when I thought about General O'Neill, I had the strongest possible impulse to leave our dull Castle, and place myself under his command.

(That shows how impressionable a young man

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may become during the two or three days following his slaying of his first foe in hot blood.)

I had, all at once, dreams of charging an enemy with sabre swinging to the right and left, and every swing laying open a skull—something after the way in which the head of a scout whose body was now being picked by carrion crows on the slope of Glen-ha-breeny had been laid open, only somewhat sharper, for a sabre-cut is cleaner than the shock of a crag. I began to think that waiting here in our Castle for the coming of the enemy was nothing in which a young man with good muscles and an instinct of strategy should have part. The enemy had come once, but their triumph had not been a long one, and it was not likely that a second body would try to snatch another such barren victory, so that the Castle and those within its walls might wait in vain for a chance of glory. The glory was in the charge at the head of a troop of cavalry against a keen enemy.

Through some inactive days this was indeed my thought. And then there came a night when the sentinel on the roof gave word of a strange redness as of blood in the Eastern sky. We hastened to the highest point on the roof, and looking out into the distance of cloud and cloud-like hills, we could see the reflection of a huge blaze. It stretched over a wide space of the cloud, so that all the East seemed lurid. The reflection pulsated as I have seen out on the Atlantic the Northern Lights quivering from the horizon to the Polar Star. At moments there was a fierce glow, the colour of polished copper, and this varied in intensity, opening and closing as it were, with the drifting of the sullen clouds; and then came moments when the whole heaven was one mass of molten red, so terrifying to behold that some of the women who stood with us on the battlements of

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the tower cried out and fell on their knees in hysterical prayer. Then the red would seem to roll away in a torrent and there would come an interval of complete blackness, so that some of us thought that the prayers of the women had been heard. But a few moments later there came the quivering of a rose-edged scroll, and all at once the sky seemed to catch flame. There was a lurid glow, that rolled in waves just above the curves of the hills, and one could easily fancy that one heard through the silence of the air the hollow roaring of a great furnace.

Father Mahony was undoubtedly affected deeply, though he gave no sign of any superstitious fear. But when the great outburst of flame seemed to make the sky livid, and the people cried out their dread, he began to repeat in solemn tones the *Dies Iræ*. The stately Latin words, delivered in a monotone, needed no fitful muffled organ-music to make them impressive, for every now and again sounds came from the great ocean that was slumbering behind the range of cliffs—sounds borne to our ears out from the thousand leagues of mysterious distance, and mingled with the words of awe that came from the lips of the priest. It was as if the living waters that roll around the world were whispering their "Kyrie Eleison—Christe Eleison—Kyrie Eleison!" to the flaming heavens.

Never before nor since have I been witness of so impressive a service. Picture us, if you can, standing on the battlements of that ancient tower, with no light among us, and that distant glow of the molten heavens, scarcely more than showing the white of the faces of the men and women—the men, some on their knees with uplifted hands, others huddled together in little groups, trembling, while they gazed out to that illumined place, and anon

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averting their faces with a murmur of fear; the women sobbing and ever crossing themselves in an ecstasy of devotion when the dread Name was spoken by the priest standing above them, erect, save that his head was bowed down to his breast, to which he held the crucifix, both hands pressing it close. And all this with the black mountains around us, and a consciousness of the sea behind.

That scene was not one to pass soon out of one's memory.

Nor was its force diminished when Father Mahony spoke to his people in their native Irish, telling them that that light which they saw in the sky was the reflection of a town set on fire by our enemies. The remorseless soldiers of the regicide usurper were doing their foul work, butchering by the light of their burning homes the poor creatures who had committed no offence but the offence of being Irish. He had seen the butcherings and the burnings at Drogheda, he said, and then, as now, a light had appeared in the heavens in response to the flames kindled on the earth, and all who saw it knew that that light in the heavens was the glorious fire that purified the souls of the martyrs who had come out of great tribulation to stand in the presence of the King of kings—the one whose voice majestic had said, "Vengeance is Mine: I will repay."

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CHAPTER XIX

WHEN I went to my room I found it impossible to compose myself to sleep. For the previous few days I had been, as I have already said, buoyed up by the thought that Cromwell's men were not spreading themselves over the country—that we had seen the last of them when Corporal Appleyard's broad back disappeared beneath the surface of the bog—that our neighbourhood would be spared the horrors which had been enacted otherwhere; but now such hope was dashed to the ground. The firing of the town of Killibrack—so nearly as we could say, the reflection in the clouds was over Killibrack — was enough to tell us that the original design of the usurper for spreading the terror of him into every part of Ireland, had not been abandoned. The red flood which had been flowing in the East would ere long stain the green of our glens in the West.

Well, whatever might come, we would show that the men of Clare were worthy to take part in a struggle which would take an honourable place in the records of our country.

But even this thought, which should have been a consoling one, failed to compose me. I snatched down a book and made an endeavour to read, but I found that I was not gaining the sense of any phrase. The pages seemed to be written in a language which I had never learned. I threw down the tome, and wandered listlessly, but wakefully, about my room.

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And then I stood in front of my window, looking out into the silken blackness of the night. I could see nought—even the outline of the cliff ridges was hidden from me. When I turned with a sigh back to the room, the light gleamed suddenly upon an object that gave back the light in a quick, living flash. I saw that this object was the crystal pyramid which Father Mahony must have returned to my shelf during the day; for since he had taken it away from the room on the morning when he had paid me his early visit, and had heard my strange story, I had not seen it.

It suddenly occurred to me that I might now test fully the composing influence of the thing. I had been, as you will remember, interrupted when I had made my previous attempt in this direction, and had made my apologies to Father Mahony. I accordingly bent over the apex of the pyramid, and, with an elbow on each side of it, began to peer into the crystal.

A longer time passed this night ere I saw, or fancied I saw, that curious molten light in the heart of the crystal. But at last it came, and once more there seemed to be a passing away of that mistiness which I had seen between the angles of the triangular base, like the drawing aside of a curtain of grey satin; and, as had happened before, the picture that I saw was of a fair green sea, quivering with low waves, here and there a splash of white floating from a wave-crest down the transparent green slope into the dark hollows. And then there seemed to glide across the sea a ship's boat with a short mast and a single sail.

It was, of course, a tiny object; for it was a true part of the picture of that wide stretch of water; but in a very short time that boat began to drift out of the picture, so to speak. It approached me, growing

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larger and larger until it had become the sole object, covering up all the space of sea that had been under my eyes. At first I saw only the prow, then as it drifted onward, the stern came in sight, and sitting at the tiller was a man. I started back seeing his face, for I was looking at the face of my brother Harry.

At the same instant I saw him rise, painfully and with great travail, to his feet, and his lips were twitched as they had been when he was used to imitate the whistle of the plover.

I fell back into my chair, for the sound of his plover call came to my ears from without.

I was overcome with surprise, the sound seeming to be as real as when I had last heard it, just a week ago. But knowing how, when one sees a picture of, say, a mountain torrent, by looking at it for some time, if it be well depicted, one oft seems to hear the babble of the water among the stones, I did not feel sure but that my imagination had been at work; so I waited on my chair listening with strained eagerness for any repetition of the signal.

It came again. All doubt was swept away from me, I could only think, "*My brother is alive—my brother is alive!*"

I sprang to my feet and ran to the window, and, craning my head out of the lattice, I gave the answering signal—the whistle of the curlew.

But so eager had I become, I was well aware that I had never before given such a bad imitation of the double note. No bird that flew would have accepted it as real. I made an effort, and gave the whistle clear, and with its plaintive alternation quite perfect. I had scarce done so before the plover's cry came thrice from below.

Without waiting to do more than catch up my riding hat, and pull on an old hunting jerkin,

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I hurried down the stairway, and out through the postern to the causeway to the seaward slope of the glen—further than I had to go when I had last responded to this signal; but I had not failed to note that this time it had seemed to come from a greater distance than before. Harry was, as I guessed, awaiting me a short way up the slope. I hastened along the track, still climbing, until I had lost my breath. At last I paused, feeling sure that I had gone beyond where he must have stood, for I was at a greater elevation than my room in the Castle tower, and yet the signal had come from a point a good deal lower. I paused, and sent forth my curlew note into the stillness of the night.

I had been mistaken, after all, for now the plover's answer came from (apparently) the great ridge known as Rathreagh. It was, however, not more than a hundred paces above me, and to the left of the glen track, so, after making my signal, I hastened onward once more.

When I had gained the grey ridge I found that I was still alone. But the moment that I paused, the plover's signal reached me again, and this time it came from a point called Carrigbrack, or the Speckled Rock. I replied with promptness, and felt my way cautiously among the crags, so that I might save myself the round needful to reach Carrigbrack by the usual path.

"At last you are there," I said when I found myself near the rock. "You have led me a pretty range."

I got no answer; but feeling that Harry was only playing off on me one of the old jokes in which he had delighted, and that he was in hiding behind the rock, I went forward altogether noiselessly, meaning thus to get the better of him in the jest, which I had now and again contrived in the old days.

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When I had sprung over the rock he was not there.

I listened if by chance I might catch the sound of his feet upon the face of the rocks or dislodging a sandy pebble or two from the zigzag above; but I heard no sound save my own heavy breathing.

I became impatient.

"For heaven's sake, Harry, tell me where you be, and tarry till I am by your side," I cried.

It seemed that I was wasting my words upon the void air.

I felt that he was treating me badly, so I sulked; I turned about and began to retrace my steps.

At once the plover's whistle sounded from far away on the glen slope. It was plain that that wild brother of mine had a determination to play his foolish game to the very end, and that he would not yield to my upbraidings or my sulks, so I judged it better to abandon the latter and treat his tricks with good humour; therefore I did not turn back, as I meant, to the Castle, but went with all speed along one of the mid-ridges of the slope. For a full mile I kept on my way, and ever at intervals I heard the plover's whistle in front of me —sometimes a long way ahead, and again not so far, but ever, ever calling me onward and onward. It had a curious persistency in its note; and once it seemed to me that there was something of distress about it.

This fancy gave me some alarm; and again I stood still to remonstrate with the boy and to ask him in an aggrieved tone what he meant, and whither he desired to lead me.

The only reply that came to me through the darkness was a repetition of that wild bird's note, which I should not neglect to say, sounded with the difference from the true bird's whistle that Harry

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had never been able to improve on, in spite of his years of practice.

And then there came to me a memory of the Irish legend of the son of Tuatha who had been led on his wandering by hearing a cuckoo's cry, the bird being none other than the wicked sorceress, Fither of the Head of Flame. Who was there that could tell me if the sound I heard was indeed the old signal which I was used to have from my brother or only some sorcerer's trick to lure me to a doom as dread as that from which the young prince in the legend had barely escaped ?

But even while I paused with this thought upon me, the plover's whistle came from afar and I followed it. I could not now avoid following it. A spell seemed to be cast over me, and though I felt, with that strange half-consciousness of a dream, that the spell was upon me, I had no power to do other than yield me to its power. I followed that strange guide with a singular feeling of pity for my condition.

It led me on through the depths of Glen Omeragh, and across the stream of the sloe bushes until I was beside the ruin of Kilgarveigh, the old church with the round tower and the ancient Irish cross—on till I reached the holy well of St. Bride, which is said to have worked miracles in its day—on till I was climbing the low slope of Knocbride, which is the hill just above the little fishing village of Lamdearg. From this hill, which is far lower than the line of cliffs, I looked out upon the Atlantic, for the first time that night, for I had been wandering along in the shelter of the glen, and so shut out from the sea. I stood among the crags of the hillside for awhile, feeling the breath from the salt water very gracious upon my face, for I was quite exhausted by that strange pursuit over the uneven ground,

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and in the darkness I had more than once strayed from the sheep-track of the glen, and was thus forced to climb among the crags.

But even while I rested, there came to my ears the unresting sound whose spell was over me. With a groan and a cry of "God help me!" I went whither it led me—down the rough side of Knocbride to where the cluster of mud cabins sheltered the fisher folk. The cabins were all silent at this hour, and the few coracles were drawn up on the little beach, far out of any mischief that the tide could work upon them.

While I stood on the pebbles of the strand, with the low waves breaking and creaming at my feet, the thought came to me that here the spell must be broken. I had followed the sound so far without mishap, and here I was at the brink of the ocean; I could not follow it further.

And yet I had a dreadful apprehension—the apprehension of a man who is under a spell, and who is conscious of it, and feeling great compassion for himself therefor—that I had not yet reached the limit of its power over me. I would hear it again, and follow it whether it might lead me back to Glen Omeragh, or across the little strand and up the mighty cliffs of Spanish Point.

It came to me again, but from neither of the steeps; the plover's note came from the grey darkness of the sea which stretched out there from my feet to the blackness of the western sky.

And I knew that I must follow it.

Never had I so great a pity for any one as I had at that moment for myself. I was going to my death, and yet I could no more resist the call than a loose feather can resist a gale that whirls it about with unseen force. Nay, as I stood there with the little waves rustling among the pebbles at my feet,

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I responded to the call of the plover with my curlew whistle.

I was telling the ghost of my brother that I was going to him.

I looked around. There lay the few coracles of the fisher folk of Lamdearg, their paddles beside them, the lines and nets hung to dry from rock to rock of those that were beyond the water line. Without another thought I hastened to the boats. They were all light things, but sufficiently well fitted for their work, and as buoyant as corks, so that they offered no resistance to the heavy, slow waves of our coasts, but rode over them easily. They could, moreover, be run without difficulty up any beach. I swung the nearest of the coracles out of its place, and dragged it in the way such craft are dragged along the pebbles, with the stern high in the air, down to the water's edge. I went back for the paddle, which I laid in its place, and then, pushing the thing into the water—the fishermen say in Irish that a coracle will float on a dewdrop—I got cautiously aboard. To get aboard a floating coracle and not capsize it, needs adroitness, but I had been used to the operation since my earliest years, so that in this quiet sea I ran no risk. In a second I was being rocked in the thing as in an infant's cradle, the ripples running under it quite noiselessly. Then I put out my paddle and shot out into the grey Atlantic, without even a prayer for my safety, although I had no notion whither I was to go or wherefore.

I cannot tell how far I paddled out to the deeps. It did not take me long to get out of the play of the light shallowing waves, and into the midst of the great slow rollers that ran evenly and without any sound of breaking under my buoyant craft. I must have gone all but a league out from the land,

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for I was beyond the shelter of the cliffs, and I could hear the curious boom of the waves that roll into the great caves of Ardbrack, and are forced out therefrom with the roar of a hundred cannon; and only far out at sea can one hear their hollow boom, clear and unaffected by the thousand songs that the sea sings evermore as the tide swings round our broken coasts.

I was so far out that I could not tell from looking landward that the land lay thither; only by hearing the sound of the breaking waves could I guess how I was going. Now, whether it was the soothing motion of my coracle-cradle or the effect of the weariness of my long midnight walk I cannot say, but when I was more than a league out I drew in my paddle, and composing myself in the bottom of my craft, I fell asleep.

To be sure, I was laying myself in no danger by so doing, for every one who has ever gone a-sailing in a coracle knows well that to lie in proper balance full length at the bottom, is to be in the position of greatest security. 'Tis only the effort to direct its course that places a navigator in peril. However this may be, I say that I fell asleep, and did not awake until a startling change had come, for when I opened my eyes, wondering for a few moments how I came to be in so constricting a bed, the darkness had fled. The soft grey dawn light was in the air and on the wrinkled face of the waters, though as yet not a touch of sunlight made a brightness over the world.

Raising my head cautiously, as my situation demanded, I found myself looking shoreward. There stretched the long bastion of cliffs—the cliffs, in such a dimness of grey light as was in the air, were like clouds that have drifted together. Only a patch of emerald shone on the brow of Knocbride, but above,

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where the edge of each slope was sharply shaded against the grey of the next, a delicate mist was crawling. In the other direction the sea mist of morning was rolling like smoke, coming in a sweep toward me, as it seemed, but never reaching me.

And while I was sitting thus with my face looking over my shoulder, the coracle swung round, so that I had no need to turn if I wanted to look seaward. I was facing the rolling mist that came from the West, waiting for the first shaft of dawn to slide upward from the iron rims of the hills to penetrate their gauze, and send it flying into fragments.

And even while I watched, after a short space of grey twilight, a stroke of sunlight fell from behind me upon the waters before my eyes, making them show all the green of their depths, and the light flashed onward and onward among the ridges of the waves, until all were of transparent emerald.

I started, for I was conscious of looking out upon the very sea that I had twice seen in the glassy depths of the crystal pyramid—the sea was the same, and there was the soft mist being unrolled before me like a curtain. All that was wanting to make the picture complete as I had looked upon it in the crystal was——

There it moved out from the mist before my eyes —the boat with a set sail—the light from the East touched the sail, and it shivered white as silver in the distance.

I was filled with the wonder of the sight—with the wonder that one feels when a dream is fulfilled. But soon the thought came to me—

"If this be indeed the realising of all that lay beneath my eyes in the crystal pyramid, the one who is in that boat is my brother Harry."

That thought seemed to me to be a reasonable one, and it set my heart beating in anticipation of

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what the next few minutes would disclose. I had out my paddle in a moment, and sent my little craft flying along among the green ridges of the waves, and the boat was wafted gently toward the shore. Whoever it was that steered was hid by the sail that stood abeam, and when the two crafts had approached each other so that it would have been possible for me to see the face of any one that might be aboard the other, I became impatient of that sail —impatient of the great hollows between the waves down which my coracle went with the swoop of a seagull down the wind. It was not, however, until only a cable's length separated the boats that I made a pause in my paddling, and when I found myself on the ridge of a high wave, I whistled like the curlew. The next instant I had slid down the green slope into the hollow, whence only the top of the low mast of the boat was visible. The next wave ran beneath me, lifting me high once more.

But if any man was in the boat the whistle had not attracted his attention. I gave it out once again, and yet a third time, but with no result that I looked for. And then it occurred to me that there was little sense in such a signal on the water over which a score of real curlews might at any time be flying without calling for the notice of a mariner, and I knew that my imitation was very close to the true note.

I dipped in my paddle with an impatient word, and when I had laboured through another space, I sang out a seaman's hail of "ahoy!" Down I went as usual into the hollow, but the next time that I reached a crest, and I saw that the boat's helm had been put hard a-larboard, and while I saw the bow pay off and the sail swing over, I saw also that the figure in the stern was none other than the one I looked for—my dear brother Harry.

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CHAPTER XX

HE was no more surprised than I was. He did not hold the tiller hard over a second longer than was needed to give him a chance of looking in the direction whence my frail boat came. He simply raised his right arm for a moment in the fashion of a seaman giving recognition of a hail. He put the boat on her course again and the sail filled as before.

And I held my rickety craft by the paddle, so that his boat should not need to have its sail lowered for me to get over the side. In a few seconds I had my hand upon the gunwale, letting it slip through my fingers until I was abaft the sail. Then I tightened my grip, and with all caution rose, first to my knees, then to my feet, and grabbing at one of the stays of the mast, sprawled myself as gently as possible over the thwart, and found myself staring, even before I had a chance of getting into a more dignified position, at the sunburnt face of a girl with beautiful eyes.

And then I knew for certain that it was indeed my dear brother Harry and none other that I had come to meet.

I suppose he knew what was in my mind at that awkward moment, for he gave a laugh.

I gathered in my legs—they were still hanging over the gunwale (most ungracefully, I doubt not)—and kept staring at the girl. She looked as if

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she had just awakened : a little smile, such as a child wears (sometimes) when newly awaking, was on her face ; and I thought that I had never seen a sadder smile in my life. She wore the rough dress of a peasant, but over her shoulders there was a thick piece of that tarred canvas which sailors wear, and which is the only foil for the Atlantic billows—it will almost keep from one's body the rain which we have on the coast of Ireland. A corner of it was over her head, but inside it her profusion of black hair flowed down over her shoulders so long that some of its curls were lying in her lap.

And I had not yet cast my eyes toward Harry.

Once again he gave a laugh, and then I turned to him.

"Brother," said he, "let me tell you that you transhipped yourself with great dexterity. There are few men now living who could forsake a coracle in favour of a ship's galley with equal grace. If you tell me that you have somewhat to eat in your pockets, we will praise you for more substantial gifts than grace. Is not that so, Finola ?"

He glanced smiling at the girl, and once more a wan smile saddened her face—that is the only way I can describe it.

"Alas, alas!" I cried. "I have nought that could be eaten. How could I know ?—ah, there is hunger in your eyes."

"That is not where I feel the gnawing," he said. The next instant he had sprung upon me like a madman, for while he had been speaking, I had listlessly put my hands into the pockets of my jacket, and much to my own surprise, had brought forth the horn in which I was used to carry a gill of strong waters when going a-hunting or on a far ride. It was ever ready in the pocket of my hunting jacket, and this was the garment which I was, all unknown

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to myself, wearing. He had the horn in his hands and had wrenched out the stopper in a second. Another second and he was on his knees beside the girl holding the mouthpiece to her lips.

"Drink—drink—drink!" he said, and his voice was quite hoarse.

Then I saw the light that came to her eyes—the light that comes into the eyes of a deer when, after being long chased, it sees before it the sanctuary of the water. I have watched the deer, but until now I had not seen that look in human eyes. She lifted up her head and put her shoulders forward an inch or two.

The first sip sent her coughing as though she were a-choking, but still she gripped the horn—his hand was upon it also: he would not run the chance of a drop being spilt—and after two or three fresh attempts she was able to drink.

I never heard such a laugh of delight as he gave when he heard the sound of the spirit making a gulp in her throat.

She must have swallowed half of it before she put the horn from her, and gave such a sigh.

"Some more—another sip!" he cried encouragingly, and all the time I could see he was perishing by reason of the longing to put it to his own mouth.

She shook her head and licked her lips like any Irish peasant after a drink.

He gulped down all that remained in the horn, and smacked his lips like any peasant man.

And all the time I was thinking, while holding the tiller of the boat, how it had been by mere chance that I had put on this hunting jacket. I had not worn it for a whole week, but when some one rushed into my room with the tidings that the sky was afire, I quickly changed the light coat which I had

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worn at supper for this hunting jacket before climbing to the battlements in the cold of the night.

"Brother Walter," said Harry, "you did not hear me drinking to your very good health just now—no, you could not have heard me, for I did not utter the toast, but believe me, 'twas in my heart. Thou'rt a pattern brother, Watty; not only dost thou take ship to meet me, albeit that the hour of my arrival was uncertain, but thou didst carry with thee a horn of the nectar of the gods. I swear to you, sir, that spirit is worthy of the lips of Venus—nay more, 'tis well-nigh worthy of the lips of Mistress O'Neill, who hath just tasted of it."

He glanced with a rallying smile toward the girl. I saw that her eyes had brightened by the influence of the potion.

"Thank God for the chance that placed it in my pocket!" said I.

"Chance? Was it chance?" he cried. "But what was the chance that drew you to snatch that coracle from the fisher's beach and haste to meet us? Ciel! when an hour before the fall of night, I saw the land looming ahead, I was set a-wondering if 'twere possible that I might land somewhere along our own coast. And then the thought that I might see you, Watty, brought back to me some of the happiest memories of our youth, and for an hour I felt myself at intervals giving forth that ancient hunting signal of ours—you have not forgot it, I'll swear—the plover's whistle. I swear to you that I kept myself awake all the night whistling like a plover; and by another freak of chance, a flock of curlews were about us in the night, calling, for all the world as if you were in the offing, answering to my signal. But, indeed, that was not the first time I made the signal, for a week ago—but I was asleep

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upon that night, and 'tis thus of no import what I dreamt."

"What did you dream at that time?" I asked of him.

"Nay, 'tis naught worth repeating—some silly fantasy about standing with you outside the Castle, and commanding you to post a sentinel on the tower. Let it pass! And to think of the chance that caused me to steer over a hundred leagues of sea without a compass until I find myself face to face with our own cliffs—I recognise them every one, Watty—that is Knocbride, where we shot the hare with an arrow that pinned it to the ground by an ear! You mind! But father—he would not break down hearing of my ill-luck—not he—he would know that I was bound to show some fight!"

"That he did! He refused to listen to any hint of disaster."

"Of course he would. That is our father. And Father Mahony? He reached you with the tidings in safety? Ah, trust to him to get through the lines? But the war—how goes the war? Hath Drogheda been avenged? What, not yet—not yet, albeit that more than two months have gone by since the massacre? Do not tell me that there are no true Irishmen left in Ireland—that the invader hath struck terror to the very heart of Ireland. Nay, sir, the true heart of Ireland beats too manfully to be weakened by such a blood-letter as Cromwell."

"There is no thought among us of yielding, though the work of devastation goes on. Wexford was, we heard, ready to hold out, and General Hugh Duff O'Neill is by this time in Clonmel, preparing it for siege."

"I knew it," came the voice of the girl. She was sitting up, and while we were speaking, she had been working her hair into a great plait, and had removed

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from her head and shoulders the tarred canvas which, as I said, formed her most trustworthy garment. "I knew it," she cried again, and her eyes were flashing in earnest now. "I knew that my father would strike a blow to avenge me."

"Brother," said Harry, "this lady is the daughter of the man whose name you have said, Hugh Duff O'Neill. Mistress Finola O'Neill was among the captives of the sword at Drogheda, and was sentenced with others to be shipped to Barbadoes, and there sold for a bond-servant. 'Twas naught to that regicide who gave the order, that among his prisoners was some of the best blood that this world knows—they were treated with insult and gibes too foul to be heard by a kennel-wench."

"The wretch that was privy to the murder of the Lord's Anointed King of England was not the one to withhold his hand when he stretched it out against the children of kings," said I. "All our hopes are now with General O'Neill, though there has also been a word flying about that Colonel Kelly, who went with his regiment of two thousand to Spain, is ready to return to the help of his country. There are also some who look for the coming of the Duke of Lorraine."

"They would do well to turn their eyes in another direction," said Harry. "I know just what is meant by help from France. It has not its origin in an impulse of chivalry, and by my soul, I would rather see Ireland the vassal of England than an appanage of France."

I saw how Harry's lean face became pale when he had spoken, and how he strove to rise from the thwarts where he was sitting, but failed by reason of weakness; and then I perceived how emaciated were his hands and arms. He was the wreck of the strong man he had once been.

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I was full of self-reproach for having talked so carelessly to him, and for having encouraged him to talk when I might have seen how weak was his condition.

"Brother," said I, "we are not within half an hour of the beach, unless the wind increases. You cannot have had many hours of sleep of late, so I insist on your taking a doze between here and the land. See, Mistress O'Neill hath been wise enough to prepare in that way for the toilsome journey to our home."

The girl had indeed composed herself to sleep, laying her head on an arm against the gunwale. He glanced at her saying—

"*Pauvre petite enfant!* Watty, you have got no notion of what greatness a woman is capable even when little more than a child. I tell you that I myself had no notion of it, though I have ever been something of a student of the sex, and have never ceased to take a kindly interest in them, and have conscientiously tried to master their philosophy of life; but I tell you that until you find yourself in adversity, with a woman for your companion, you will never know——"

"Brother," I cried, "I swear to you that I shall waken that child to listen to you if you continue to weaken yourself by converse. Lay yourself down, Harry, and snatch that half-hour's slumber which you need so greatly."

He looked at me for a moment. Then, with an effort, put out a skeleton hand to me.

"Watty," he said, in a low, sad voice, unlike his usual tones, "God only knows what I have gone through during the past two months. Ever since our escape—a week ago—or is it a month ago—a year—*parbleu*! 'tis more than a year since—since—what was I talking about? Oh, to be sure, 'twas

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about our fishing—you were quite right to take this boat for our fishing, for I am hungry as a sea-eagle, and I would that you had let me sleep another hour in my bed. But you always were ahead of the sun, father—always——"

Greatly to my relief, the tones of his voice grew fainter and still fainter, his chin fell forward upon his chest, and his eyes closed—they had been half closed all the time he had been wandering in his speech with me. I made up my mind that I should be in no undue haste to gain the beach of Lamdearg. An extra half-hour of sleep would do no harm either to Harry or his companion.

But what a sleep was his! I do not believe that any spell of sleep (as the mariners term it) which he had at that time lasted for longer than five minutes. His eyes would close in a deep slumber for a while, but before he could have got to the bottom of that poppy valley, which men reach before they are really refreshed by sleep, he would be up with a start, and, staring wildly around him, as if conscious of neglecting a duty. Then he would glance at me and smile, and before that smile had dwindled from his face, he was locked fast in the bondage of slumber.

And there at the other side of the boat sat the girl whom he had called Finola O'Neill, the daughter of our general, about whom I had talked with the priest only a brief time before. Very different indeed was her way of sleeping. She lay with her cheek pillowed on her arm, and I perceived from the easy way of her slipping into that attitude, that she had had long practice of sleeping out of a bed. If she had not become accustomed to such a bed of hard wood she could not have lain as she now did, without any sign of uneasiness. But she never stirred a limb. The great plait of her hair went round her

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neck once, and the end of it lay upon her bosom, rising and falling with the heaviness of her breathing. She never moved and she never woke.

And there I stood by the tiller of this boat of strange sleepers, steering it through the light waves that were now sparkling in the bright sunshine; and I wondered what would the fisher folk think when this strange boat, sailing straight out of the western ocean, and bearing on one side of the helmsman a beautiful girl, fast in sleep, and on the other a youth, handsome as a prince is thought to be, came into view! Would they not believe that this was a mystic craft, like that in which the sons of Us had sailed across the Moyle, and that the two sleepers were the children who came from Tir-an-og, the Land of Youth, to Glenaragh, and so deep was their slumber that the nurse Sheila, who knew all secrets of sorcery, made wings for their boat out of the new leaves of the arbutus, so that it skimmed over the mountains all day and at evening dropped silently down to Lough Eragh, and the children did not wake until the next morn.

And, indeed, for myself, I scarce could realize that this was I, Walter Fawcett, steering a boat that came from I knew not whence, and that there was Harry, my brother whom I had not seen for more than a year, sleeping with his chin on his bosom.

As for the girl. . . .

But I thought it better not to go any farther in my consideration of the elements of what was strange in the situation. I had a feeling that if I were to set myself thinking of the girl I should never be able to keep the boat on her course to the pebble beach of Lamdearg, for the presence of the girl added so greatly to the mystery of this navigation, I feared that I might find myself longing for Sheila the sorceress to weave wings for the boat

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so that we might drop quietly upon the surface of Lough Omeragh.

Long before I had quite succeeded in getting the reality of the matter into my mind, I heard the shallowing of the ripples upon the pebble beach, and made haste to lower the sail, though truly there was not sufficient way upon the boat to bring about an injury to her prow, even though it were to run upon a sharp reef rather than smooth stones.

The moment that the sail slipped down the mast it no longer hid from my eyes the figure which I would have seen earlier but for the screen of the sail-cloth—the figure of Father Mahony standing upon the brink of the water, seemingly awaiting our coming.

He put out a hand so that the prow scarcely grated upon the stones. I rather wished that he had not been quite so careful, for there the two sleepers remained motionless, even after I had shaken the boat by leaping off the gunwale, and then, with the priest on the other side, hauling the prow out of the water—there they slept, sounder than ever, but so heavily and with such a manifest joy of slumber, that no one could have feared for a moment that they were in the sleep of death. Nay 'twas the sleep of life they were having, and 'twas clear that they were giving all their attention to it. My brother in particular was seemingly jealous lest a single mouthful of sleep should escape him. This was a rude thought to have, but it was due to the overwhelming joy which came to me by watching his joyous slumber.

And a short way off on that steep pebble beach stood a group of the fisher folk of Lamdearg—a man and two women with a little girl—watching us with something of awe upon their faces. Still further on an old woman was on her knees praying

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fervently, and among the coracles stood some fishermen whispering together—doubtless of the wonder that had come to pass: a coracle had been spirited off during the night and it had changed to a stout ship's boat, which, moreover, was met by Father Mahony himself, so that there could be nothing unholy about it, though it would be just as well to be cautious in approaching it for the present.

There we stood for a while, as if we had all indeed become the victims of one of the wicked spells of Fither, and had been turned into stone. Father Mahony looked at me and smiled, and I looked at the sleepers and laughed. Each of us seemed waiting to see if the other was sufficiently lacking in compassion to disturb the sleepers.

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CHAPTER XXI

SUDDENLY it struck me that the strangest matter of all was the presence of Father Mahony himself at this place. It was surely as startling as his appearance at the edge of the bog had been.

"How is it possible that you are here at this moment?" I asked of him.

"How would it be possible to stay within the Castle when you passed out, son Walter?" he said.

"You heard me pass out by the postern, and followed me?" I cried.

"Even so."

"But that was soon after midnight. You cannot have seen me launch the coracle in the darkness?"

"I saw you launch the coracle."

"And you have waited here ever since?"

"Nay; when you dipped in your paddle, I wended my way back to the Castle, and ventured to put bridle and saddle on your pony and another. Both are grazing at the back of Knocbride. Were it not better for you and me to lie down and sleep also, if these are not to awake?"

"But how on earth did you guess that we should have need of the ponies?"

"Dear son, when I saw you go forth, when I heard you repeat your curlew signal among the rocks, how could I fail to be assured that you had gone forth to meet your brother?"

"But I had proved to you—as I thought—that he had been slain by the troopers?"

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"Ah, son, I fear that I am stiff-necked; it takes much evidence to satisfy me."

"And yet you were satisfied that I had paddled the coracle out to the West in order to meet my brother? Nay, father, a small amount of evidence sufficeth you."

"I am a man full of inconsistencies, dear son; that is how I have contrived hitherto to keep my neck from the hangman's noose—to keep my stomach free from the leaden pills administered through an opening in the skin."

The priest smiled in his grave way.

"Father Mahony," said I, "all that has happened since last night hath bewildered my poor wits. I heard my brother's signal, and hastened in the direction whence it came. It led me hither, and then it sounded out of the darkness of the western sea. I launched the coracle, and the first gleam of dawn showed me this boat sailing out of the mist."

"Son Walter, I desire to see no more of the wonders of things created by God than a hound following the footsteps of his master over a ground that has been trodden by hundreds of other feet, to believe, as I said to you once before, that there are influences in Nature capable of working what some men term wonders. The sorcery of yesterday is the philosophy of to-day. Do you want to see a miracle? Watch a honey-bee. Nay, is there aught in Nature so marvellous as sleep—that nightly death which comes to every thing that lives, and without which death itself would come?"

I looked at the excellent illustration before us of the working of this marvel.

"Poor children!" said Father Mahony. "They are happy in their half-death of sleep. They have forgotten the misery, the insults, the hunger, the——"

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"What a wretch am I that I should forget their hunger!" I cried. "They have been starving; and as for their thirst—ah, you should have seen them drink from my horn. Let them sleep on, father, until I have the wherewithal to break their fast."

I was hastening to the cabin of the O'Farrells, when the priest checked me.

"I did not forget to ransack the buttery ere leaving the Castle, my son," said he. "Norah O'Farrell hath been provided with wheaten cakes and venison. The uisque I thought prudent to retain by me."

I stood marvelling at the forethought of the man.

"You have proved that you have no lack of confidence in your deductions," said I.

It seemed as if the noise made by my feet on the stones had disturbed our sleepers, for at this moment they both opened their eyes with something like a start. Harry was on his feet in a moment, though he staggered when there and clutched the forestay. The girl did not try to rise; she only looked about her with wide wondering eyes.

Then Harry recovered himself; but he looked at me for some moments as if he had never before seen me, and afterward at Father Mahony. In a moment he had burst into a laugh.

"Ciel! I recollect all now," he cried. "You boarded us from a crazy coracle, Watty, and I know that I took it all in good part, thinking of it as the most natural thing in the world. But you, Father Mahony—sir, I now perceive why you are here; I borrowed something from you a while back, and you are in doubt if 'twill ever find its way back to your hand. Sir, thus I ease your mind."

He took from a pocket a small file of fine edge, and handed it to the priest.

Father Mahony received it with a bow of mock

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gravity. They were both Irishmen—the one making a jest, and the other responding to it even in that supreme hour.

But the next instant there was no semblance of a jest in the air, for brother Harry had the hardihood to make the attempt to leap from the gunwale to the strand. Nothing could be more pitiful than his failure. Happily he fell into Father Mahony's arms.

There he remained for a long time.

I could not look on any longer. I could only hear the voice of the priest whispering while he clasped him to his bosom,

"My son—my son—who was lost and is found—my son—my son—what you have suffered!"

After a pathetic silence I heard my brother's voice.

"Ho, Watty, you unworthy squire of dames, why do not you give your support to one who is so worthy of it as Mistress Finola O'Neill?" he cried. "Nay, sir, she is not minded to have another voyage in the guise of a sailing swan, and for the sake of all the saints living and dead, let us have a victual."

"And a comb," came the voice of the girl.

Those two had certainly urgent need of all the implements of the toilet. Harry was in rags, and without a hat. He had a thin beard that was all unkempt—he that had ever made it his care to trim his beard and moustachios after the exact manner of the late king. In his state he looked the veriest wood-kerne, and a disreputable wood-kerne into the bargain. But when I saw through the tatters of a sleeve the bright red ring as of new flesh on each wrist I could laugh no longer at the jests which he made regarding his attire. I knew what was meant by those dreadful scars scarce healed.

And the girl had just the same marks. She had

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been insulted by the same bondage of fetters. . . .

I found that my teeth were tight set, and my hands clenched until my nails bit into the palms. I took an oath when I saw the seared marks on the girl's round wrists—I laid my hand upon them, helping her from the boat, as though they had been sacred stigmata, and swore that I would avenge them.

She could walk, but only with a slow effort, and I had almost to carry her to the cottage of Alfonso O'Farrell—the dark-eyed son of a Spanish grandmother, who owned the best of the fisher cabins. And while I was thus close to her—Father Mahony following still more slowly with his arm about Harry, —she told me that neither she nor my brother had tasted food during two days. Seven days had passed since they had cut the rope between the ship and the boat, and they had found that only six cakes of seaman's bread had been put into the boat's locker to provision them for the voyage—only six cakes and a small beaker of brackish water.

"And no shelter by day or night," I said. "Ah, madam, what a soul yours must be to enable you to bear up against such evil chance!"

"Evil chance!" she cried. "Nay, I give you my word that the change to me from the ship to the boat was as real as that from purgatory to the place of the blessed. Ah, sir, I have no words wherewith to tell you all that I suffered under the hatches of that ship. The hourly sights of horror—of disgust—of loathing, the sound of the clanking of the irons on every hand—the groans of the poor women who had suffered through the siege of the town, and we shipped sick—some at the point of death——"

She stopped, and put her hands before her face.

"Prithee," I said, "make no attempt to recall

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that time of hideous suffering. Pray heaven that it be all over now."

With a curious start, as if awaking from a dream, she took her hands from her eyes, and I could feel from the way she was trembling in every limb, that she was making a strong effort to control herself. She succeeded so nobly that, by the time Harry staggered up—the priest's arm about him—she was smiling, with scarce a trace of sadness in her face.

But long before we had entered the cabin of the O'Farrells, the air was laden with the smell of broiling fish, and it was good to see how these two poor creatures suddenly got strength in every limb, so that Father Mahony and I found that they were actually dragging us with increasing force the last score of yards to the cabin, and then they dropped into osier chairs which stood at the rough table. There was one fork in the cabin—a marvellous thing with a haft of green malachite, and a silver band cut with the arms of some Spanish grandee and the suspended lamb marking the order of the Golden Fleece—and this was placed, alongside a wooden spoon cut from the flat blade of an old oar, before the lady.

"If your ladyship will have the grace to pass on the fork to his honour when you have used it, he will wait for it," said O'Farrell, laying a wooden platter of broiled fish on the table.

Neither of the two could make a reply. I saw the way their eyes went out to the platter. I hope I may never again see such a look on a human face.

The girl never so much as glanced at the fork which had been produced to do her honour—it would have done honour to a queen—she caught up the spoon . . .

Harry was not waiting either for fork or spoon.

Father Mahony saw how the fisher-folk—them-

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selves oft on the brink of starvation—were, with that sense of courtesy which seems to be an instinct of these people, trying to conceal what they felt on seeing the high quality eat in such a fashion. He picked up the fork, and talked to the man and his wife about it. I could hear O'Farrell tell him that it had been given to his mother by the lady in whose castle she had lived as a maid-servant, and that there had also been a spoon to match it, but that was before his day; it was a mere family tradition.

By the time this converse was over Mistress O'Neill had become so fastidious in her eating that she could not do any longer without a fork. She ate the cold venison very daintily, and when she got to the third slice she said that in her opinion venison was vastly improved by being eaten with a conserve of red cherries.

Thereat the priest's eye gave a twinkle; I could see that he was hoping that the O'Farrells were now watching the girl eat; they would speedily learn with what extreme delicacy and careless deliberation the high quality partake of their food.

* * * * *

It was while we were wending our way up the track to Castle Omeragh, Father Mahony and I walking alongside the ponies which he had so thoughtfully provided—by what instinct of provision I know not—and which now bore Harry and Mistress O'Neill, that we learned some of the incidents of their escape from the snow-rigged vessel that was bearing them to be sold as bond servants in Barbadoes.

The plot had been hatched by one of the mariners—a man whose brother had been in the service of Harry in France, and had received a great favour at his hands. This man's duty was to distribute the ship's bread and water to the prisoners 'tween decks,

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and thus he had many chances of converse with my brother. Hearing that he had, by the aid of the file given to him by Father Mahony, succeeded in severing a link of his fetters, he listened to Harry's suggestion to think of some plan of escape for him and Mistress O'Neill before reaching the Indies.

Before the vessel passed Cape Clear he had given Harry the result of his contrivings on this matter. It was to this effect:

The snow carried two boats hoisted upon davits, one on the larboard and the other on the starboard quarter. But she also carried a small galley hauled up close under the stern, and just beneath the square windows of the cabin. The man had sailed in a vessel from which two seamen had made their escape in the night from a promised flogging by creeping into such a boat through a cabin window and casting it adrift, and he thought that it was quite possible for Harry and Mistress O'Neill to follow their example, he himself undertaking to provision the boat for some days—no very difficult matter for him, since he had charge of the prisoners' victuals.

The scheme was a daring one, and could not have been carried out except with the connivance of certain of the crew; but it was carried out, and with great success, on the first night after the change of wind which was needful for an enterprise that required the most favourable conditions for its perfecting. The wind had been blowing pretty steadily from the south-east, so that the snow had made a good run from the Irish coast, but it was plain that such a wind would be dead against the sailing of a boat to any part of the coast. With a westerly breeze, however, the boat would have something of a chance, especially if the loss of the boat were not discovered aboard the vessel until the morning. So the first night of the change of wind, when the

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snow was forced to beat up to the north, at a signal given by the friendly mariner, the girl had slipped into the lazarette in the cabin, and there awaited the coming of Harry. By good fortune and a pretty fair share of contriving on the part of the sailor, the adventurous pair managed to creep out by one of the big windows in the high poop and to swing themselves into the boat, which they lowered as noiselessly as possible—though for that matter the vessel made such a creaking all over when beating against a head wind, the boat might have dropped bodily into the water without materially increasing the noise of straining timbers and breaking waves and creaking blocks—and cut adrift in the darkness.

That was really all the story; only Harry explained to us how he had, through apprehension of being pursued by the vessel in the morning, only run before the wind for some hours, changing his course to the south at the first streak of dawn, so as to puzzle the skipper should he put his vessel about and start in search of the fugitives; for he would certainly be under the impression, my brother guessed, that they would run the boat straight before the wind without variation, so as to reach the Irish coast with as little delay as possible.

Of course it was impossible to say if it was to this thoughtfulness on the part of Harry that he owed his escape; but at any rate no sign of the snow, or indeed of any other craft was visible the next day, or during the seven days they were in the boat. My coracle was the first craft they had seen since parting from the snow.

"If we had only been more freely victualled, we should have had little to complain of," said Harry, concluding his story. "But you will agree with me in thinking that a cake of ship's bread, as hard as a crag, does not consititute very high living,

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however generous may be the allowance of maggots to every cake. Oh, yes, we had no reason to complain of the supply of maggots ; but they need to be properly cooked before they can be rightly considered a delicacy, so that ours, in spite of the high spirits which they constantly enjoyed, made but indifferent messmates."

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CHAPTER XXII

WE were a merry party at dinner that day, and my father was merriest of all. He had greeted Harry on our arrival at the Castle with no more than his customary warmth. We might all have been returning from a hunting expedition, so well did he keep his feelings under control.

"Didn't I always say he would be among us before old Noll got our way?" he cried, clapping Harry on the back so heartily as to make him, in his weak state, to stagger. "When Purdon came to us pulling a long face while he told us what had happened, didn't I say that Master Harry was well able to look after himself? And by the powers, I believed him quite equal to the pleasant duty of looking after the interests of any Irish girl who stood in need of help—on second thoughts I withdraw all restrictions of nationality; he would be as ready to help a beautiful French demoiselle as he would a plain Dutch frau. But I'll swear that my fondest dreams never saw him giving his willing help to so charming a creature as he has now been fortunate enough to bring hither. Mistress O'Neill, I welcome you, not only for the great name which you bear—not only because 'tis the name of the greatest soldier of our time, but because you are as a ray of sunshine on a day of clouds and of morning winds."

"Sir Gilbert," said she very prettily, "I feel just like the beggar-maiden who met the bard

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Oisin, and he sang such a song about her that, in the eyes of the nobles of the king who listened, she seemed to be clad in robes of gold embroidery in place of her rags. Sir Gilbert, you make me forget that I am clothed only in rents."

"Madam," cried my father with a bow the manner of which he had learnt from Monsieur de Bossuet, who had taught his late Majesty, "Madam, you shall be clad in nobler robes than ever the King's nobles pretended they saw on the bard's beggar-maiden."

And indeed, without casting a slight upon the song of the bard Oisin, and without prejudice to the imagination of the nobles, the garments out of the midst of which Finola O'Neill shone beautiful as the Evening Star when it appears among the violet robes of twilight, were magnificent. She came to dinner in the robes that had been worn by my mother upon occasions of state. Since her death they had been packed away in a coffer of cedar, but now my father did not hesitate to send them to the room where the girl had gone asleep, and the old retainer who had been my mother's own handmaiden, had tended upon her, robing her in violet satin with embroidery of gold and a broad collar of Venice lace.

When she came among us in this splendid fashion, and with her hair flowing in great plaits over her shoulders, I noted the light that came into my brother's eyes, and, thinking of Kathleen O'Brian, I was not over pleased. But on such a day of sunshine as this such a cloud quickly passed away. We lifted our goblets and drank to Mistress Finola, and our bard Cormac sang us one of his noblest pæans of welcome—the splendid song composed by the bard of King Fergus of Ulster to celebrate the coming of the princess to espouse his son.

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At first our bard Cormac was disposed to resent the return of Harry, for whom he had sung his lament only a few weeks ago; he seemed to think that for a man to return after being properly lamented in accordance with the highest traditions of Munster, was to take a liberty not lightly to be endured.

Before we slept that night, the Castle bell was set jangling, and in the hall we awaited with some interest the announcement of the visitor, for in those days our visitors were few. For my part I had an idea that it might be Kathleen, who had heard in the unexplained way that news has of flying over the country, of the return of her lover, and had braved all the dangers of the time to come to him.

I was mistaken. Our visitor was none other than Kennedy, the squireen (as the peasants call the gentleman who farms his own land, and tries to get the better of a neighbour over the sale of a horse), with the doubtful pedigree, who had been so sympathetic with me in referring to the fate of Harry after the fall of Drogheda.

On entering the hall I could see that he was overcome with astonishment to be greeted by Harry; for some moments he had the expression of a man who sees a ghost, or who fancies he sees one, which is exactly the same thing. He grasped Harry by the hand, and tears were in his eyes—tears were also in his voice when, after several choking attempts to speak, he managed to get out a word or two.

"My boy, my dear, dear boy!—back in safety! Oh, it seems far too good to be reality. Ah, this sight more than outweighs all my own losses which I came hither to prate about. What is the loss of house and stock and all that a man has slaved for during these years, compared to the joy of this hour? But how—how did it come about, sir? You were

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never shipped off with all the rest of them to the Indies ?—I knew that, monster and all that Cromwell is, he would never have the heart to do that. But what happened ? Oh, Sir Gilbert, you know as well as myself that the news that your boy was a prisoner was like the spreading of a pall over the county Clare."

So he went on by snatches, holding my brother's hand in both of his own hands, and giving it a hearty shake now and again. (I had no thought that he was of so emotional a nature.)

But before Harry could reply, Kennedy seemed to recollect that he had not yet greeted us. He apologized for his omission.

"I know that you will excuse me," he cried. "You will know that I could have eyes only for one in this room. Madam, no slight is meant to be cast upon you, who are accustomed, unless the nature of Irishmen has greatly changed since my young days, to enchain the eyes of all"—he bowed with some slight elaboration to Finola. "But this lad and I were such good friends—if I may presume to say so much of a member of one of the best families—we were such friends long ago that—that—oh, tell me the whole history, Master Harry."

Master Harry was undoubtedly touched by the emotion displayed by this good fellow, who, though possessing certain qualities which made him more than the equal of the acutest men in buying or selling a horse—mostly in the selling—was in the ordinary matters of life as simple as a little child.

"Oh, my good friend Kennedy," laughed Harry, "you make over much of a fuss about a very plain business."

"A plain business—a plain—he calls his return to our midst a plain business!" cried Kennedy, lifting up his hands. "Sir, it may be a very small

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matter to you, but give me leave to say that there are some people, and I take the liberty of counting myself among them, who look on it as—but tell us all about this plain business. I am breathless till I hear it all."

"Why, there is nought to be told save that I was put aboard a certain vessel, snow-rigged, in the Boyne Water, and shipped thence to the island of Barbadoes in the Indies; but not believing myself to be duly qualified for the duties of a bond-servant to a planter of sugar canes, I thought it wiser to return to my home. You see, Kennedy, I am a bit scrupulous in my dealings with men—I had not the advantage of being brought up in the horse business—and I felt that I should be imposing on any simple planter who might buy me for a term of years."

"But how—how—what, did the snow put in to Limerick River, giving you the chance to escape from thence?"

"Nay, I escaped on the high seas—I regret that I cannot give you the exact parallel, but 'twas about a hundred leagues to the west of our coast."

"Then they hadn't put you in irons? They were not, after all, so bloodthirsty as 'twas said they were."

"Oh, they did not forget the irons, Kennedy; but if so, I was equally mindful of a small bit of the same metal, only harder, and made in the shape of a small file."

"The heavens be my bed! You cut through the fetters? But what then? was it in a boat?"

"'Twas a shrewd guess, sir; believe me, Kennedy, whoever may assert the contrary, for any one escaping from a vessel on the high seas a sound boat is, to say the least, a great help."

"The master of the mariners winked at you, I doubt not, sir?"

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"Most mariners have a winking eye, Kennedy, but they reserve it for their adventures ashore. I never clapped eyes on our skipper save when I was marched aboard. I did not even see him before I left his deck—you see I was in something of a hurry, and so forced to put off to a more convenient season my thanks for his hospitality. I had no longing to see him since, though I should have liked hugely to hear him—from a distance, and the wind against him—on the morning after my hasty departure."

"Who was it then that helped you to make good your escape?"

"Sir," said my father with dignity, "you may rest assured that if my son got any help aboard that accursed vessel, he will not betray his friend even to his own father."

"I might have known better than to ask, Sir Gilbert; but I give you my word that I only put the question in order that I might say, 'God bless that man!'"

"But what about your own affairs, friend Kennedy?" cried Harry. "You said something about having lost some stock by Cromwell's men, did not you?"

"I have forgot it all since I entered this hall, sir," said Kennedy. "What signifies the ruin of a man in a humble way like myself, when the scion of our most respected family in the county of Clare is safe and sound? What matters it if every stick that I had went to the flames last night——?"

"What, were you in the great fire of last night?" I cried.

"It matters nothing, Master Walter; but the town of Killibrack was burnt to ashes by Cromwell's men last night, and everything that I possess, except my paltry savings in cash, went to the flames. That is why I am here now. I have come to claim

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your hospitality, Sir Gilbert, until the morrow, and to ask you if I can be of any help to you in defending your Castle; I fear that there is little doubt now that the intentions of our enemy are to burn every castle in the county that resists his murderous forces. But he'll have a bit of trouble here, Sir Gilbert. 'Tis well known that Castle Omeragh is strong enough to resist an army. Still every true man is a help in the day of battle, and you can command me to the death."

"I thank you, sir, with all my heart," said my father. The Castle is strong, but a few more men who can shoot straight would be no harm upon our battlements. And you say that Killibrack is in ashes? Did the people show fight? Surely three hundred fighting men at least were available?"

"The most of them fled to the hills at the first appearance of the troopers, Sir Gilbert," replied Kennedy. "I did my best to rally them, giving them the assurance that the enemy did not muster more than thirty all told, and urging them to show a bold front and strike a blow for freedom. Alas, sir, I spoke to deaf ears. I could not muster a dozen men at my back, so what was left to me but to fly? The town was set afire in three places, and I witnessed the destruction of all that I possess, save only the pound or two which I sent long ago to my brother's care in England. If I had not been mounted on the best horse in my stables, it's cut down that I should have been by those savages. But you will be able to show a good defence here, Sir Gilbert. You have plenty of powder, I doubt not."

"Enough to enable us to hold out against the strongest force for a month or two," replied my father.

"And you keep it in a safe place, I trust?" said Kennedy anxiously.

"We have a magazine," said my father.

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"That's good news, sir; you have not waited to make preparations until the enemy is at your door—and touching that same door, Sir Gilbert—is it capable of resisting cannon shot?"

"That depends on the cannon, I suppose," said Harry. "There are cannons that no wall of stone will resist. I saw what Cromwell's cannon did at Drogheda. But such weapons are not likely to be brought against us in the West."

"That's what I'm thinking too, Master Harry," said our visitor. "I say, 'tis all very well to send a score or two of wild troopers into the West, to burn villages and to strike the terror of Cromwell to the hearts of the starving peasantry, but quite another matter to drag the big guns over the mountains to batter in the walls of the castles of the gentry. I heard a report a week ago and more, that a corporal and some men had actually been despatched by Cromwell to this very region, and that they had not returned. I suppose you saw nothing of them in your rambles, Master Walter?"

"Should I be here now if I had come upon them, think you?" I asked. I had no mind to boast of having slain one of these same troopers, or of having lured his comrades to their doom. Who was I that I should boast?

Besides, I remembered how I had talked to this man some time before respecting the principles of the Society of Friends of the Truth.

The moment after I had answered Kennedy by asking him another question, I chanced to glance across the room to where Father Mahony was reading, and I could see that he had heard what I said, and that he approved of my guarded evasion of a straightforward answer. He did not, however, look up from the page, nor did he make any sign of commendation.

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"The rumour that reached me may have been false," said Kennedy thoughtfully. "However, I thought it my duty to let you know all that I heard. There should be no secrets between men who, like us, have made up their minds to stand by one another till death. And you have enough small arms in your armoury, Sir Gilbert? There may be fighting at close quarters. And what about a mine in case of assault? Have you dug any mines, sir?"

"You may make your mind easy on those points, my good friend," said my father.

"Ah, would that our neighbours had your foresight, Sir Gilbert!" said the visitor. "There is O'Brian, for example. I hear that he is all unprepared—not an ounce of powder in his Tower, and not so many bullets as would serve for a game of marbles."

"If he hasn't an ounce of powder, all the bullets in the world would be of little use to him," said Harry.

"But I happen to know that O'Brian has powder enough to blow Cromwell's whole army into the Moyle," said I. "Ay, and bullets enough to sink every man of them to the bottom of the Atlantic."

"You surprise me, sir," cried Kennedy. "But 'tis glad I am to get that news from a true quarter. You have been at O'Brian's Tower lately, no doubt, Master Walter?"

"Quite lately, and you may take my word for it that the Tower is safe enough."

"Do you tell me so? Well, 'tis glad I am to hear it."

So we talked for another hour, when Kennedy expressed a wish to go to the room that my father had ordered to be prepared for him. He had not had a chance of an hour's sleep for several nights,

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he said, and it would be a boon to him to snatch a doze before supper.

But when at the point of leaving the hall, he laid his hand on Harry's shoulder and laughed.

"It does me good to see you again, my boy," he cried. "Oh, haven't we had the good times together? Do you mind the day we hunted the old dog otter in the stream of the Storach? Ah, those were the great times! Mind you, if I am to be here, I'll insist on taking my share of duty. You have mounted a sentinel, I perceive; well, I'm your man for duty on the battlements when my turn comes, don't forget that."

"You may be sure that we'll make you work for your bread, sir," said my father.

"And so we will," he added, when Kennedy had left the room. "I'm glad to have the help of such a man. He is a good shot, and we'll have need of every good shot in the neighbourhood if we are to keep the enemy from our doors. I'm sorry for the man's losses; but the man who has suffered by an enemy is the best one to have on your side when the enemy is in sight."

It certainly seemed as if our visitor were determined to prove the truth of what my father said; for at supper and when we were smoking tobacco afterward, he never ceased railing against Cromwell and his men. Mistress O'Neill had gone to bed early, so that he was no longer restrained by her presence from speaking from the depths of his heart regarding the invaders, and he spoke with a great deal of feeling respecting them. His buildings had cost him over £1,000, he told us, and where were they now? But he could bear this loss with equanimity, he said—he did not show much equanimity in our presence—what made him mad was the thought that they had captured the five fine horses

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which were in his stables, and would probably use them as troop-horses against us. If he had thought that they were to fall into the hands of Cromwell, he would have put a bullet through the head of every mare's son of them.

So he went on until nightfall, displaying this gratifying hate in respect of Cromwell and his men; and his vehemence seemed to stir Father Mahony out of his customary reserve, for his eyes gleamed while he echoed the denunciations framed by his visitor, and they discussed together with great freedom our several plans for defending the Castle. Before bedtime Kennedy had explained to Father Mahony that though he was a good Protestant, as his forefathers had been, yet when it came to a question of presenting a solid front to tyranny, he thanked heaven that he could stretch out his right hand to any priest of the Church of Rome. There were, he said, times when all differences of religion should be forgotten. This was the case at Drogheda, where English Protestants and Irish Catholics had fought side by side, and had died side by side, cementing with their blood a union that was bound in the end to be triumphant.

Father Mahony was undoubtedly pleased, and declared with quite unusual emphasis, that if Master Kennedy's views were more widely distributed Ireland would soon become a different country.

The next day Father Mahony came to see me in the armoury, and asked me if I could spare him a few minutes to discuss a matter in the hall. Of course I laid down the harquebuse, the lock of which I was oiling, and went down to the hall. He stood, I recollect, just beneath the great spreading antlers of the ancient elk, and began, to my great surprise, to talk upon a matter which he could quite as easily have discussed in the armoury. It was simply

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whether, as a matter of right, the ship's boat in which Harry had landed at Lamdearg should be given to O'Farrell, who was recognized as the head of the fishermen, or to the man—his name was O'Leary—whose coracle I had taken to sea and failed to return.

He talked most volubly and with all the skill of one accustomed to the debates of the schoolmen, upon the question of rights presented by this matter, and I listened, marvelling at the genius of the man who, at such a time as this, could spend his knowledge of logic upon a matter which was only not trivial because he had made it the centre round which his wisdom played.

Before he had completed the case for O'Farrell, we were interrupted by the entrance of Kennedy, booted and spurred and wearing a riding-cloak.

"Have I broken in on a lecture? If so, I ask your pardon, gentlemen," he said.

"'Twas an ordinary point Master Walter and I were conversing upon," said the priest. "Do you purpose riding forth for any distance, sir?"

"I am going about the duties of a vedette, your reverence," replied Kennedy. "One cannot be too careful in these days of peril, sir."

"Truer words were never spoken," said Father Mahony. "There is a certain shrewdness in the air to-day, Master Kennedy, which should not be lightly faced by any but the most robust. That is why I have the presumption to advise your honour nor to stir outside Castle Omeragh to-day."

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CHAPTER XXIII

I CONFESS that I was conscious of a little shock of surprise at the priest's words—rather at the tone and the manner of their delivery. Father Mahony spoke with his eyes upon the floor, but with a certain incisiveness of phrase which somehow made me think of the clean swish of one of the Spanish steel blades in our armoury when, after burnishing it, I was used to wheel it about for the strengthening of my wrist and for the joy of hearing its sound.

I became alert in a moment, and eagerly watched the face of our guest. I had no trouble in perceiving that he was taken by surprise. That was why he gave a light-hearted laugh and assumed an air of complete innocence, while he said—

"Ah, Father Mahony, to us that have lived in Ireland most of our lives, all airs are alike. We must all do our duty to our host at this terrible time."

"We must," said the priest. "That is why I tell you not to take a second step toward that door."

He had already taken one step toward the door. And now Father Mahony was facing him, looking into his eyes.

"What form of jest is this?" said Kennedy, when he had but indifferently recovered from his surprise. "Prithee, Master Walter, interpret betwixt Father Mahony and myself. It seemeth to me, sir, that this is not the most suitable hour for passing off a jest upon such a man as me."

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"Sir," said I, "I have ever found Father Mahony capable of discriminating between jest and earnest. Believe me, he is in deadly earnest just now."

Kennedy looked at me, then at Father Mahony. I could see that his endeavour to appear unconcerned was giving him greater difficulty than before. Then he cocked his head and inflated his chest, making a brave show.

"If he's in earnest so am I," he said. "I am not the man to let the Castle be put in jeopardy because a Jesuit priest presumes upon the protection indiscreetly granted to him. Come, sir, think you that I will be deterred by such an one as you?"

"Yes," said the priest, "you will be deterred by such an one as me—with this."

The suddenness with which Father Mahony took a stride toward the man, raising with a sudden whirl his right hand carrying a pistolet to within a foot of his head, startled me, even though I had been prepared for something.

There we stood for some breathless moments, —the priest looking along the barrel of the pistolet, Kennedy cowering instinctively, with his left arm upraised as if to ward off a blow, and I with my hands clenched, and (I fancy) my jaw drooping, while I looked at the two men, full of wonder at what was happening before my eyes.

"You rascal!" said the priest in a voice that was little louder than a whisper, but the blaze in his eyes was thunderous. "You rascal," if you dare to move a step except at my bidding, I shall scatter your brains among the soot of the rafters. Stand where you be, and put into my hand the pass which you received from your master, Oliver Cromwell—your commission as a spy."

"The pass—the—the pass? What pass? I

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tell you, sir, I know not what you mean," said Kennedy quite firmly. He cast an imploring glance at me. "You at least, Master Walter, will believe me. You have long known me for a true man! You will not allow yourself to be led by the suspicions of a Jesuit priest. I swear to you that I have never had a pass from Cromwell. What need would I have for a pass, tell me that? What, a man ruined as I have been by Cromwell's men, with a pass in my pocket! Was there ever such madness? I appeal to my host—he is a gentleman; he knows that I am true to the cause of Ireland. I appeal to Sir Gilbert."

"We need not go in search of him: he has come in good time," said I, as my father entered the hall, and stared at each of us in turn. The priest had lowered his weapon, but stood vigilant as ever by the door.

"Heavens above us! Is it possible that under this roof the usual quarrel of Irishmen striving for the freedom of Ireland is taking place?" cried my father. "Alack-a-day! gentlemen, is this same pitiful story to be repeated in the hour of Ireland's sorest need?"

"If there be any quarrel, Sir Gilbert, I swear to you that 'tis none of my seeking," said Kennedy. "Your name was on my lips when you entered, sir. Is it with your sanction that I am detained by menaces—a pistol held to my head and no less—from doing my service to you and yours this day?"

My father looked to me for an explanation.

But what could I explain?

"Sir," said I, "I doubt not that Father Mahony will be able to satisfy you that——"

Father Mahony held up his hand.

"Sir Gilbert," said he, "I am free to confess that I acted somewhat hastily in regard to my

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fellow-guest under your roof. But indeed my zeal on behalf of our country at this time is apt to get the better of my judgment. I have had my suspicions, . . . but I promise to fling them to the winds if Master Kennedy will but give me an assurance that he hath indeed the cause of our country at heart."

I saw the gleam of triumph that came into the man's eyes at this confession by the priest of the weakness of his cause for suspicion. I could hear him draw a long breath at that moment. He was plainly relieved.

And in the presence of my father, the priest, I must say, looked the picture of a man who has acted foolishly on the impulse of the moment.

"Ay, 'tis after you have presented your pistol at my head that you acknowledge that you acted over-hastily," shouted Kennedy with indignation in every tone. "'Tis the like of you, let me tell you, that has kept the best men from joining in the league for the saving of Ireland. Who would be a member of a party to be held up as a traitor by such as you, Father Mahony?"

"Sir," said Father Mahony, "if you give me the simple assurance that I ask for I shall humbly implore forgiveness for my haste, and banish my suspicions for ever."

"Suspicions—suspicions of what? By the powers! 'tis enough to make the truest friend of Ireland turn into her deadliest enemy, to be accused of treachery in this way. But for me—me that has lost all by my adherence to the cause—oh, 'tis too much—too much!"

I could see that my father was becoming irritated. He was never fond of strong protestations, no matter from whom they came.

"I regret with all my heart that there hath been

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somewhat of a misunderstanding between you and Father Mahony, Master Kennedy," said he. "But now that it is over and past——"

"If Master Kennedy will but consent to allay my foolish suspicion—a weakness of temperament, Sir Gilbert," said the priest.

"Of course you will receive the assurance that you ask for," said my father, with a measure of testiness. "As a matter of form, Kennedy, you will give Father Mahony your word of honour."

"A thousand times, sir; though to be suspected—you will allow that 'tis cruel—but there, I forgive you, Father Mahony, for the sake of the cause for which we are ready to shed our best blood."

"For myself I have only one quality of blood," said my father, who ever hated the canting of phrases, especially patriotic phrases.

"You will not refuse to give me your word of honour that you hold Cromwell in abhorrence?" said the priest.

"I will not refuse. How could I refuse, seeing that——"

"Write those words there, Master Kennedy."

Father Mahony had in a flash drawn a sheaf of papers from his bosom, and had put them on a table on which stood an ink-horn and feather in front of the man.

The suddenness of the act startled him slightly. That was not to be wondered at: it startled me.

"What is it that you want me to write, sir?" he cried.

"Forgive my unhappy nature, sir: you see I have been in several Irish leagues. I ask only for half a score of words. 'I swear that I am an enemy to the Lord Protector'—that will be enough for my suspicions," said the priest.

Kennedy took the pen with the natural clumsiness

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of a man who is but an infrequent writer. He formed his letters laboriously, but he made his final flourish with rapidity. He drew a long breath, raising his head and jerking back a lock of hair that had fallen over his forehead.

"Take your assurance, Father Mahony," he cried. "Sir, I wouldn't for a thousand pound have a suspicious nature such as yours; but maybe I have other weaknesses, and so I honour yours."

"And now the matter is ended," said my father.

"It is not quite ended," said Father Mahony.

"What mean you now?" cried my father. "Hath not the man given you all that you needed?"

"He hath given me all that I needed to prove him ripe for hanging," replied the priest.

Amazed though I was at that moment, I had sufficient presence of mind to be able to trip up Kennedy in the wild rush that he made at Father Mahony. He fell awkwardly along the floor—noisily too, for my brother Harry heard the thud from without, and flung open the door, standing amazed in the act of entering the hall.

Father Mahony had not stirred an inch from where he was standing. He did not even look down on the man who was lying at his feet. He was holding out for my father's inspection a bundle of documents.

"I only needed a line or two from his hand to make my proof of his guilt complete," said the priest. "I had my suspicions of the wretch—I believed that it was he who had provided Corporal Appleyard with the map of our glen which I found among his papers; now I am sure of it. The man that wrote on the paper bearing the outline of Glen Omeragh and the passes to the hills as far as O'Brian's Tower and the Gap of Dunboyne, the words, with others, 'I swear I am a friend to the

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Lord Protector,' is the man that wrote on this paper at my inditing, 'I swear that I am an enemy to the Lord Protector.' See the two scripts side by side. Is it open for one to doubt that this is so?"

He held out to my father and me the two papers; the one bore on its surface a roughly drawn map, and, at the foot, certain instructions as to distances, ending with the words, "I doe hope that y^e^ summe promis^d^ bye my lord C. in his letter for y^e^ mapp will be payd toe mee without delaye, for allbeit I sweare that I am a frend toe y^e^ Lorde Protector, & readdy toe take his side openly in goode time, I have neede of y^e^ money from daye toe daye; but when His Excecy. doth grant toe mee as indeed he hath promis^d^ y^e^ Cassell of Sir G. Fawst I will make full returne of alle."

The second paper contained the paper which Kennedy had just written, namely—"I sweare that I am an enemie toe y^e^ Lorde Protector," and the forming of the letters in the one case was to an exactitude that of the letters in the other. But even if there was any chance of doubt in the matter, the framing of the elaborate flourish which appeared at the foot of each paper would have been enough to convince the most careful that one hand only had been employed on the two papers. All the elaborate loops and windings which appeared in one flourish were reproduced in the other.

We all scrutinized the documents in silence.

"Doth a more venomous reptile live in the world?" said my father. "Heard you how he talked yesterday, gaining from us all the knowledge of our preparations to resist the Roundheads? String the wretch up to a staple in the parapet of the tower, so that when his friends draw nigh he may be the first to greet them."

The foul creature, when he heard his sentence,

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flung himself along the floor at my father's feet, swearing that he was an innocent man, and in the same breath imploring mercy, denying with hoarse gasps that he had had any hand in the framing of the map, and anon offering to confess all if we would but spare his life. He could tell us all the secrets of Cromwell's camp, he declared; he would serve us heart and soul; he would, if we so willed, betray into our hands the band of Cromwell's marauders who were seeking the destruction of the Castle—his life—his life—all that he asked was that we should spare his life.

Never did I see a man so debased. He had not even the courage of the vermin, who, when all their devices for escape have failed, will boldly turn upon their enemies, and die facing them. This wretch seemed to have lost whatever of manhood he might once have had. He grovelled at our feet, he shrieked for mercy, he gasped and foamed at the mouth, and in his eyes there was such terror as I could not have believed any one to possess and live. Looking at this degrading thing one felt oneself degraded below the level of a beast. For myself I felt no pity for him—only horror as I watched his contortions and listened to his yells. A man! well, only a man can, of all created things, sink to such a depth of degradation. Only such a man as can sink to such a depth, can arouse in the breast of a man such a feeling of shame and horror as was mine at that hour.

There was upon the face of Father Mahony no expression either of disgust or of triumph. His features were quite unmoved. When the fellow had exhausted himself in that wild passion of imploration, the priest said—

"Stand upon your feet," and when Kennedy had painfully struggled up from the floor into what

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I may term an abject upright position, for he looked even meaner thus than when prone, Father Mahony questioned him respecting the pass which he assumed he held for all Cromwell's lines.

"Nay, good father, I may have erred in judgment on some matters, though I swear that my intent was not that of a traitor, but I was not wretch enough to traffic with the enemy. I have had no pass—no pass whatsoever. Indeed, my intent was to entrap the Roundheads, who are on their way hither. I meant to lead them on to their destruction. I have no pass. Of what use would a pass be to me, sir ?"

The priest looked at him straight in the eyes for a few moments; then, with a little exclamation of impatience, he caught the man's coat and tore it from his body. With his dagger, which it seemed he always carried, he deftly slit up the lining, thereby releasing several papers, which fluttered to the ground.

"A pretty spy!" he muttered while picking them up. "A spy that would not escape detection in a nursery!—not advanced beyond the coat-lining stage of concealment! 'Tis almost a pity to hang so clumsy a fool! Yes, I thought we should find the pass. Here it is." (He was scrutinizing the papers.) "And yet another map—ah, 'tis nought but a simple plan of the defences of Castle Omeragh, showing how it must be assaulted from the west, that the besiegers may 'scape the fire of the cannon on the roof. And here—why, the fellow is a draughtsman!—a plan of O'Brian's Tower, with a note stating that it may be captured any afternoon between the hours of one and three, that being the dinner-hour, when there is no likelihood of any watch being kept. I fear that it must be allowed that the devil tells the truth

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sometimes. Now we have done with the carrion. Let him feed the crows."

He folded up the papers and made a motion with his hand without so much as glancing in the direction of Kennedy.

"Ciel!" said Harry, speaking for the first time since he had entered the hall. "There has been no falser knave since the days of Judas. Shall we shoot him or hang him? Ah, what a pity 'tis that such a wretch can suffer but one death just the same as the worthiest of men!"

The fellow was on his knees in a moment—on his knees and then on his stomach, grovelling like the reptile that he was.

"Spare my life—spare my life," he howled, and watching him, I recalled Shakespeare's lines that so contradicted my brother:

> "Cowards die many times before their death,
> The brave man dies but once."

"We shall waste neither hemp nor lead on him," said Father Mahony. "We shall preserve him with care, and when the time comes he shall go forth to the arms of his friends. We shall see how they receive him."

"And meantime?" said I.

"Meantime you would do well to fetter him to the pillar in the dove-cote," said the priest.

The dove-cote was the name which we had given to the grated keep high up in the eastern tower of the Castle. It was a small room, with a narrow slit of window, and that crossed by bars, where the great O'Desmond had been wont to starve a prisoner or two when he was at the height of his glory.

Harry shook his head sagely.

"There is no more comfortable assurance of the

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harmlessness of a spy than that which comes when he is seen dangling at the end of a hempen line," said he.

But his words were scarce audible by reason of the hoarse volume of gratitude which Kennedy poured forth at the feet of the priest.

I caught him by the neck and thrust him out of the hall, and in the Castle yard I shouted for two of our men to take charge of him to the dove-cote. I saw him safely disposed of, answering him never a word in reply to his demands as to what I thought Father Mahony meant by saying that he would be sent into the arms of his friends. He was plainly ill at ease, having failed to grasp all at once the exact shade of Father Mahony's intentions respecting his future. I did not give much thought to his future; it was enough for me to take care that he was safe for the present. I felt confident that he would not travel far with the fetters locked about his ankles and secured to the iron ring in the pillar that supported the roof.

When I returned to the hall I found Finola O'Neill singing very prettily a song in the Irish tongue in praise of the valour of our countrymen, and not omitting a word or two of approval of their fidelity to one another. The experience of the bard had led him to ask when an Irishman was ever known to be a traitor to his brethren or his country?

Well, I thought that I might, if I were so willed, frame an answer to that bard. But Mistress Finola sang with great spirit, and my brother leant back on the oaken seat and strummed the melody on my lute in the most graceful French manner.

But my father and Father Mahony sat together at one of the tables, having spread out before them

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the various maps and scripts which the man who called himself Kennedy had sewn up in the lining of his coat, fondly fancying that they would be quite safe in such a place of concealment, as if any human being suspecting that another has certain documents disposed of about his person, begins his search for them otherwhere than in the lining of his coat!

"The rascal's name is Kenny, though he called himself Kennedy, and never tired in his references to his English origin," my father was saying when I stood by the table.

"I would fain hope, Sir Gilbert, that that is the one instance of his speaking the truth," said the priest.

And then brother Harry began to sing another ancient song, full of spirit and carrying conviction to a hearer in every note. Its burden had reference to the fidelity of the Irish race in all affairs of the heart. Wheresoever an Irishman planted the flower of his affection, there it abode for ever, this bard affirmed.

Harry trolled out with great spirit and true feeling this testimony to one of the most noted traits of our fellow-countrymen, and all the time his eyes were dwelling upon the fair face of Mistress Finola, who responded in gentle maiden fashion to the ardent words that he sang.

But watching the meeting and mingling of their glances, I felt something akin to anger; and yet it was not anger, for who could have such a feeling when every now and then one saw how thin were the fingers that twanged the strings of the lute, how emaciated was the face over which the love-light passed when the strain of the song became soft and tender?

Hand and hand the two had come through a time

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of awful suffering, and the bond of suffering is as strong as the bond of love. Albeit I had made up my mind that Kathleen must be made happy, no matter who should be sacrificed to that end, I could not be so cruel as to interrupt the song which Kathleen's lover was singing at the feet of the beautiful young creature who had trod with him the path of fierce tribulation.

And so the song went on to the very end.

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CHAPTER XXIV

WE found much that was of interest to us among the papers which the spy had carried about with him. The rascal had clearly been for some months in correspondence with Cromwell's army, for one of the letters which we had before us was from Colonel Ireton, the man who had married a daughter of the usurper, and it made reference, among other matters, to the taking of Harry at Drogheda and to my return from America. I cannot say that I felt much flattered by the passages in which I was dealt with. But there was great laughter in the hall when Father Mahony read out the colonel's note of agreement with his correspondent that there was not much to fear from "y^e^ sonne of Sir Gilbert whose name you saye is Walter, being as you have writ, a shallow-pated vain stripling."

"'Tis pretty plain that our friend Kennedy gave a very minute account of you to Colonel Ireton," said Father Mahony, whereupon my brother and father laughed hugely, but Mistress Finola only smiled for an instant, and then looked reproachfully and reprovingly at the others. (Hearing their laughter, I felt that we had not done our duty in regard to the spy ; we should certainly have hanged the wretch.)

And then came a letter in another hand, which told of the despatching of Corporal Sword-of-the-Spirit Appleyard with a small body of troopers to the west, their object being to burn all that they

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could lay hands on, and so to spread terror of Cromwell's army through the county of Clare and prevent my father from gathering together any considerable number of followers to oppose the triumphal march of the invader through the country.

Yet another document, signed by Cromwell himself, conveyed to Robert Kennedy the castle and estates of Omeragh as a reward for his fidelity to the Lord Protector and the Parliament, and especially for the assistance which he had given them during the campaign in Ireland.

"We should have hanged the rascal after all," muttered my father.

"'Tis not too late yet," suggested Harry. "There would be something of humour in the act of hanging a man on the battlement of the castle which hath just been granted to him."

"A jest after Cromwell's own heart," said my father. "The Lord Protector hath a shrewd sense of the comic element in all matters of butchery. My lord Iveagh told me that when he had signed his name among those of the other regicides to the warrant for the execution of his late Majesty, he flicked the ink from the feather over the face of the secretary."

"What the letters have made plain to me," said Father Mahony, "is the truth of those who have conveyed to me an account of the intentions of Cromwell in the west. He pays you the undoubted compliment of assuming that your influence is paramount in this region, Sir Gilbert; that is why he aims at humbling you speedily."

"The sooner the better," said my father. "I trust that you fettered that rogue short to the staple in the pillar, Walter. I hold you accountable for his safety."

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"Would that we had run him through the body while he grovelled on this floor," said I somewhat impatiently. "I was not the one who stood out against the suggestion of a quick despatch of the fellow."

"Prithee, no more in this strain, son Walter; thou'rt too bloodthirsty, son Walter," said Father Mahony.

I looked at him for a moment, and he perceived, I know, that I was at that moment recalling to my mind the scene which I had witnesed by the side of the great bog—the last scene in the tragedy of that day.

"These are the maps which I found in the pouch of Corporal Appleyard," he said in a low tone which I alone could hear, while he laid his hand on the documents.

I held my peace.

In the evening I climbed the eastern tower to the dove-cote, and duly saw to the condition of our prisoner. I examined the iron of his fetters, lest it should bear the marks of the teeth of a file. I had heard of prisoners filing through their fetters and so winning their freedom. Having satisfied myself on this matter I left him, steadily refusing to answer any one of the many questions which he showered upon me. I might have been stone deaf for all the attention I gave to his words. If I were indeed a shallow-pated fool, I still had enough sense left to me to enable me to control my speech. Our prisoner learned nothing from me.

But I daresay, if he had another opportunity of describing me to such a man as Colonel Ireton, he would have abated nothing of his references to the shallowness of my pate.

A wild wet sunset filled the sky above the cliffs, flaring through flying clouds and changing from

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crimson to orange as I looked forth. But before I had reached the hall, great grey masses of cloud had swallowed up every streak of colour. The night did not, however, become so inclement as I had expected it would, and the moon was shining in a clear sky when, three hours later and after supping in the hall, I paid another visit to our prisoner, my vigilance being warmly commended by Father Mahony, as well as by my brother. I found the fellow sleeping as peacefully as a healthy infant; and he did not even stir when I flashed my lanthorn in his face.

I had no notion that guilt may slumber just as peacefully beneath the eye of an observer as innocence.

I had not the heart to arouse him in order that I might examine his bonds; for I said to myself that even if he succeeded in freeing himself of his fetters, he would still be a long way from freedom, so long as I held the key of his prison; so, after locking the door and then drawing the chains through the rings and double locking them, I visited the sentinel on the roof, and found him awake and ready to give me the report of a fire which he had seen beyond the heather of Glendhu. It was doubtless some farm which Cromwell's marauders had fired, carrying out their mandate as they had been doing in many directions.

I considered while I descended to my own room in the tower that I had earned a sleep, and, indeed, I had scarcely thrown myself on my bed before I was sleeping as gently as, I might say, in the light of my newly gained experience, ever guilty man slept.

I made a resolution, however, not to allow the night to pass without a further visit to the man who called himself Kennedy, and, having the faculty

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which many men enjoy of awaking at a set hour, I found myself sitting up yawning furiously an hour or two after midnight.

I slipped my feet into my shoes, wishing, as I had often done during the previous evening, that Kennedy had broken his head when it had bumped on the floor after my tripping of him up, or that Father Mahony's pistolet had exploded in his face; in either case I should have been saved an intolerable deal of vigilance. But now that I was awake and on my feet, I went about my duty with a sort of yawning briskness, my lanthorn swinging from my hand.

I looked into the dove-cote, and saw that the prisoner was still sleeping. This time I had no qualms in regard to disturbing him. The wretch had a notion that I had come to hang him in the middle of the night, and began to whine for pity like a cur that hath been caught in the act of stealing. This was enough for me. I knew that this was not the sort of man to work out his own freedom. The man who wins his freedom needs first of all to possess the spirit of a man, not the cringe of the cur.

I left him as before, without uttering a word, and, making fast all the locks, returned to my bed.

I did not find it easy to pick up the threads of my sleep, so to speak. I had a good deal of turning and tossing within the next hour, and the reflection that I had done my duty in all fidelity did not soothe me greatly, though I confess that it was ever present with me.

And then a small thing happened—a small thing, but enough to set me upright in my bed, with beating heart and long-drawn breath; for lying with my wide-open eyes opposite the door of my

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room I saw the keyhole suddenly fill with light, as if some one held the flame of a candle or the window of a lanthorn at the other side. Only for a second or two was the keyhole filled up with the light; but, as I say, the thing was enough to set me upright in my bed waiting for what might follow.

All that followed was, as I thought, the pat of a foot on the stone staircase.

Some one bearing a light was stealthily going down the steps.

Once more I was out of bed, and, without even pausing to put on my shoes, I slipped on some clothing, groped about the table for my pistolets, which lay there ready primed, and having buckled them about my body, slipped noiselessly out to the stairs in time to see the light disappearing through the entrance to the corridor leading to the oaken hall.

Down I went in my stockinged feet, quickly but noiselessly, and on through the corridor. For a few moments I kept behind the great curtain at the entrance to the hall, peering out from the side of the Spanish tapestry to see who it was that had laid his lanthorn on one of the tables beyond. But the moment after I had looked I started back in amazement, for there, standing in the middle of the hall, surveying himself with extraordinary complacency in a piece of looking-glass, was Kennedy the spy—the man whom I had left, scarcely an hour before, safely fettered to a pillar in the dove-cote!

There he stood, full in the light of the lanthorn, giving his beard a tweak at places and his moustachios a twist—no doubt they had become a trifle awry during his sojourn in the dove-cote—for all the world as though he were preparing himself for an important meeting with some one who would

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scrutinize his appearance closely. I was amazed at the coolness of the fellow, but assuredly the leading thought that I had at that moment was that we must have among our retainers at the castle more than one who was as great a traitor as Kennedy himself; for, were it otherwise, how could he have escaped within the hour? how could he have got back the coat which Father Mahony had torn from him? and how, moreover, could he have had the rent in that same coat repaired? What astonished me most, giving me a feeling of hopelessness of ever being able to stand against our enemies, was my observing that Kennedy was wearing the coat that had been torn off his back by Father Mahony.

And then, apparently satisfied with his appearance, he put the looking-glass carefully into a pocket, took up the lanthorn, and walked straight to the tapestry behind which I was in hiding.

When within a stride of me, I flung the curtain to one side and confronted him.

He started back, but with no sign of fear on his face, and actually gave a laugh.

"Stand where you are, sir," I cried sternly. "Stand! If you make a move, if you shift your hands by the breath of a barley-corn, 'twill be your last movement in this world."

"Nay, sir; I will be a statue at your bidding," said the fellow coolly. "But I pray of you not to keep me thus for long; I have a rendezvous outside the castle before the dawn, and I have far to ride."

I was astounded by his effrontery. I felt like one in a dream. I began to ask myself what had happened during the hour to cause the man to assume that air of unconcern. Was it possible that the castle had been silently taken by Cromwell's men, who had released their spy?

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"What, sir, have you naught to say to me?" he cried. "In that case, I need delay my departure no longer."

He was actually turning right about when I whipped out a pistolet.

"You hardened ruffian!" I said. "If you fancy that that spirit of impudence will prevail with me you shall find out your mistake too soon for your comfort. I will give you exactly a minute to tell me the names of all within the castle who are your accomplices—the name of every man who hath helped you to escape this night."

"Prithee, good Master Walter, turn that murderous tube of iron in another quarter; I like it not pointed so straight for my head," said the man with some little show of trepidation. "Listen to me, sir, and hear me swear to you upon my faith and honour as a spy, that the sole person under this roof who must be held accountable for my being in this place and at this moment is Father Mahony—the priest whom you have always trusted!"

"Foul liar!" I cried, "you shall not live an hour after that slander of one whom you know to be as true to his friends as you are false. Make your peace with heaven for this and all your other crimes, for as certain at you stand before me, you shall leave this hall a corpse."

Before I was conscious that he had made a move, he had his arms about me, and it was the voice of Father Mahony himself that sounded in my ear.

"God bless you, son Walter! you and yours are the truest hearts in Ireland," he was sobbing. "You and yours are worth the working for, and, please heaven, I shall leave you in better condition than I found you in. My dear son, you will forgive me for my jest with you. But in truth it only occurred to me, when I heard you speak, to test

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the value of my disguise. You have proved to me that it is satisfactory."

It took me several moments to realize that it was indeed Father Mahony who stood before me disguised, as to hair and beard and complexion, so perfectly that none who lived could take him to be other than Kennedy the spy. I had oft before heard of the marvellous dexterity of the priest in the matter of disguises—Harry had told me since his return that, when he had passed for a mariner in the Boyne river, and had rowed the prisoners out to the snow, he was a sailor in every movement, adapting his language, moreover, to that figurative style in which men of the sea express their views on many subjects—but until this moment I could never quite realize how great was his skill. Not merely had his voice the very inflection of Kennedy's voice, but he had also acquired Kennedy's trick of raising his right hand with one finger pointed straight in front of him when beginning to speak. It need scarcely be said that this gesture added beyond measure to the force of his disguise.

I stood back from him and laughed heartily so soon as I had recovered myself; but then there came to me a thought of the risk that he had run. Supposing that I had followed my impulse of the moment and had sent a bullet through his head, should I have been to blame? Perhaps not. But should I ever have forgiven myself?

I reproached him with some measure of vehemence for his having so played upon me; but when he had patted me on the back, saying pleasantly that he hoped he should die by as worthy a hand as mine, and then putting in a sly word or two regarding the want of accuracy of the French pistolet at so great a distance as three yards, I thought it wiser on my part to drop this tone of

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reproach, and to express the wonder I felt at such a display of his powers.

"But pray, Father, what is the object of your disguise as Kennedy at this time?" I inquired, for I confess that it seemed to me to be without an object.

"What," he cried; "was not Kennedy in the very act of riding forth to convey to his friends all the knowledge of our defences and the defences of O'Brian's Tower which he gained under this roof? Think of the disappointment it would be to them who await his coming were he not to appear."

"And 'tis your intention to avert this disappointment?" I said, becoming aware in a moment of his designs.

"Even so, sir; I flatter myself that I can give as good an account as Kennedy could ever have done of the strong points and the weaknesses in our defences and those of O'Brian. At any rate, I think I can give such an account of them—in the guise of their pet spy—as may lead our enemies into a trap."

"They must not attack O'Brian's Tower," I cried with some measure of anxiety. "Whatever happens, they must be prevented from assaulting O'Brian's Tower. I tell you that with a few cannons, well directed, they will make a breach that will admit them to the tower in half an hour."

"I shall not fail to make them acquainted with those facts," said the priest with a smile. "But 'twill be by a roundabout method that I shall convey the knowledge to them," he added.

I saw that I was not the one to give any special instruction to Father Mahony upon this occasion. To make the attempt to do so would be as ridiculous as it would be for me to enter into controversy with him on the Apostolic Succession; nay, I have a

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notion that Father Mahony knew a good deal more about the strategy of sieges than about the polemics of a vexed question of creed.

I saw him mount his horse—it had been Kennedy's horse, but we thought he would have no further use for it—at the Castle gate, and watched him ride off through the moonlight.

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CHAPTER XXV

I TOLD my father and my brother of the enterprise on which Father Mahony had set out, and set Finola laughing over the account which I gave her of my surprising him in the hall and of his surprising me. Harry's cheeks glowed at the thought of the priest's riding with Kennedy's pass into whatever camp the enemy might have pitched, and of his giving them an abundance of false knowledge respecting our strength and our manner of fortification.

"Would that I were strong enough to ride by his side!" cried Harry, clenching his emaciated hand upon the horn handle of the bread knife as though it were a sword grip. "Why did not I return a week earlier? Think of that enterprise, Finola! Think of it, Walter! Oh, Lord, man! how did you hold yourself in when you heard that he was going? How did you do it?"

"He was brave to do his duty and remain at home," said Finola quickly. "That is what my father says: it needs a braver spirit to lie silent in a ditch while the howitzers are roaring around one than it does to lead a troop with sabres flashing against the enemy's guns."

"I thank you, Mistress Finola," said I; "I believe that I should receive the commendation of your father upon many occasions. I have a notion that the part which I was designed by nature to

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play in warfare is that of the man who lies in the trenches without so much as a murmur."

"And you will live to lead a charge of dragoons against the enemies of King Charles the Second," said she, smiling across the table at me.

"Of course, it would have been madness for me to have gone with Father Mahony," said Harry. "But think of the fascination of going among those rascal Roundheads, telling them fables in respect of our position. I do hope that Father Mahony will be able to mislead them thoroughly."

"Hum; he is a priest already," said my father with a dry laugh.

"I am not altogether assured of his powers," said Harry doubtfully. "I believe that I could surpass him, though I have never studied theology."

"You have studied the art of fortification, and we must make the most of your knowledge within the next few days," said my father. "I am not certain as to the position of the saker that should command the causeway, or as to the elevation of the demi-cannon on the battlements of the tower. You will have to make our minds easy on these points before noon to-day, and then we shall talk further as to the disposal of our little force in the case of an attack."

"I might need to be helped up the staircase, but that is nothing," said Harry. "What is on my mind at this moment, however, is not the condition of our defences, but the condition of O'Brian's Tower. Would it not be well, think you, to carry at least Kathleen and Madam from their end of the glen?"

I was glad to see that his thoughts were at last turned in the direction which I thought they should have taken long ago. His concern for the safety of Kathleen showed me that he had had some twitchings

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of conscience within the past day or two in spite of his lute practice at the feet of Finola. But I was amazed to discover that he knew so little of the character of Kathleen as to suggest that she would ever allow herself to be persuaded to forsake her home and her father in an hour of danger. Why, even I had known her better than that. Although I felt very strongly that she should not be allowed to run the chance of danger by remaining at O'Brian's Tower, I had not once suggested to her or her mother, upon that last day when I had been with them, that they should allow me to be their escort to Castle Omeragh; for I had felt assured that Kathleen at least would never think well of me in the future, had I suggested that she would not face the peril that threatened her home.

"If I were not as weak as a lath I would not hesitate a moment to take horse to the Tower and be the escort of the women-folk to our stronghold," resumed Harry bravely. "Ciel! think of their danger, should the Roundheads succeed in dragging a cannon to train upon their gate!"

He looked in my direction, as if he meant to hint that I might undertake the duty which his weakness prevented him from discharging.

I remained silent, and he gave an exclamation of great impatience.

"We shall have to await the return of Father Mahony," said my father.

"And meantime those butchers may be at their work," said Harry. Once more he glanced at me, and once more I failed to respond to the suggestion of his glance.

"'Sdeath, brother," he cried with flashing eyes, "have you no mind to do something worthy of your name—worthy of our house. Can you sit here in security, and not be stirred by the thought

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of peril to these poor women at the further end of the glen ? "

" My dear Harry," said I, " believe me, I can appreciate to the full your feeling in this matter. God knows that at no hour of the day is the thought of Kathleen and her mother absent from my mind. I would do all on their behalf that may become a man—all except suggest to them the forsaking of their home when it is threatened. I tell you frankly that I refuse to consider the possibility of either of them listening to such a suggestion, except with contempt."

" But what, are we to leave them to be butchered ? " cried Harry.

" I have nothing further to say, except that the man who believes that Kathleen O'Brian would be content to save her own life while her father and the other inmates of the Tower were exposed to the danger which threatens them, does her a gross injustice," said I.

" And I agree with Master Walter," said Finola, flashing out a hand to me—a small thin hand with blue veins seen beneath the transparent skin. " I have heard of Kathleen O'Brian, and I feel sure that it would be to wrong her grievously to think that she values her own safety more than the honour of her house."

" Why should we anticipate the worst ? " cried my father. " Why should we assume that O'Brian's Tower must be taken at the first assault ? Why not think of the likelihood of the Tower resisting every attack of the small force and the insignificant ordnance that may be brought against it ? Good heavens, lad! what has come over you that you must always look for the worst instead of the best ? Just think what your condition was a month ago, and contrast it with what it is to-day, son Harry.

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Doth that course of thought tend to make you feel hopeless? Nay, boy, let us be prepared for the worst, but, at the same time, let us look for the best. Just think that in every contest we have had with the power of Cromwell, we have come off the victors. You were a prisoner in the hands of the enemy; well, now you are a free man. Then, what about the corporal and his troopers? A boy and girl mounted on ponies overthrew seven of those seasoned fighters."

"Don't forget the capture of their most seasoned spy, sir," I added.

"That is our crowning success," cried my father. "And not merely is their most useful spy in our hands, but we shall be able to gain by his capture so complete a knowledge of the intentions of our enemy that we should have little trouble in defeating them. As for the peril to O'Brian's Tower, which you seem to think must come, let me ask you if you fancy for a moment that Father Mahony will do his work so indifferently as to allow of any attack whatsoever being made upon one of our weak points? For my part, I have too much confidence in his powers of deception. Now, let us look to our defences, so that, whatever happens, we shall not lay ourselves open to blame for carelessness."

As usual, my father's cheery words produced an immediate effect upon all who heard him. We sprang to our feet—Harry with surprising agility considering how weak he had been a few days before—and set about the important duty of examining the demi-cannon on the parapet of the roof and the saker which was meant to command the passage of the causeway from our oaken door to the hill slope. Harry was pleased to commend my judgment in regard to the position of these and

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the cannons, which we had mounted at other points of vantage, all being carefully masked by masonry; and Harry's opinion on all such matters was that of a man who had had a good deal of experience in practical warfare. He also expressed his surprise at my success in the training of our retainers. They were no longer the raw and clumsy pack of lazy-bones whom he had left behind him at the Castle when, with a little band of excellent fighters, he had set out for Drogheda, but an active body of men who would be certain to give a good account of themselves should occasion arise. So much had my persistence done for the apt material upon which I had to work.

It was when we were testing the efficiency of the machinery for the exploding of the mine in the causeway that my father alluded to my remarkable discovery of this particular scheme.

"It would be idle for Watty to protest that he has no genius for the art of defence while this stands to his credit," said he. "Why, only one who has real genius to supplement his studies, could have alighted upon this secret plan of fusing the mine."

Harry stood musing with the end of the wire in his hand.

"'Tis a strange thing that I should have had a dream relating to this same business," said he. "I tell you that I fancied that I had come to the causeway and seen the breaking up of the masonry, wondering all the while what it meant. It seemed the most natural thing in the world for Watty to signal to me from the postern after his old fashion, imitating the call of the curlew—you have ever done it with true perfection, brother—and, lo and behold! Master Watty came hopping across the broken stones to tell me that a mine was being sunk in the causeway, and forthwith I gave him know-

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ledge of the old mine and of the trick of the exploding wires, though, by my word, I cannot recollect that I had ever such knowledge as I imparted to him. I tell you, sir, that this thing is strange enough to be accounted at least white magic."

"What, sir," cried my father, "would you claim the honour of the discovery for yourself? Perhaps you will say next that you prompted Watty in a dream of the whereabout of the saker cannon, which we afterward hauled up to the parapet! If so, pray tell us now where 'twas found."

Harry laughed.

"Nay, sir," said he, "I claim naught of the honour due to my brother in any of these matters; but I promise you to submit to his direction as loyally as if he were His Majesty King Charles the Second himself."

"Only so loyally?" said my father. "Why, you rascal, did not you leave the Queen Mother mourning alone at the Louvre? Talk not to me of your loyalty to your Sovereign after that, you rascal."

Harry blushed and gave a little laugh of considerable uneasiness before turning away; for he never could stand any reference being made to the escapade which had brought about his sudden return to his native land from the Court of the King of France.

My father gave him an encouraging slap on the back, thoughtfully regulated in vigour to the weak condition of poor Harry.

"Fear not, my boy, that the day will come when your loyalty will be rightly valued by the King," said my father cheerily. "And, so far as I can hear of His Majesty Charles the Second, he is not the man to bear malice for such a frolic with a wench as made the Cardinal draw a long face," he added in a whisper.

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Harry shook his head gravely, as one who suggests that his days of youthful follies have long since gone by. And this demeanour of his made our father laugh hugely.

But though I stood by and said naught, I could not but send my thoughts back to that night when I had heard my brother's signal-whistle and had descended from my room in the tower to talk with him on the causeway. Harry said that he had had a dream of that midnight meeting. Well, if that was his dream, was my recollection no more than that of a dream?

I could not answer that question which I put to myself. I knew that Father Mahony believed that I had been dreaming, though I tried to convince him that I had been awake, and hoped to prove it by the discovery of the apparatus of the mine. But then, Father Mahony was not easily convinced on any point not coming under his own cognizance; though, to be sure, he had not given the least smile when I told him how I had heard my brother's signal on the night when I had put out to sea in the coracle, following the plover's note, and returned in the dawn with my brother by my side in the boat.

I resolved to think no more on these strange matters—at least, not until the graver matters which more closely concerned us had been comfortably settled. I had no difficulty in directing all my thoughts to a consideration of the question of the safety of Kathleen O'Brian, though I knew her better than to fancy that she could be induced to leave the Tower so long as her father remained in it. She would have to be carried off by main force by any one anxious for her safety. I felt convinced of this, and thus I was led to marvel how it was that Harry, who had long ago (as I

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myself had witnessed) taken the heart of the girl by storm, should know less of her nature than did I—I who had addressed myself to the task of convincing myself that I loved her only because she loved Harry.

It would be unprofitable to pursue this course of reflection, I quickly perceived; for I had an apprehension that it would lead me into difficulties from which I might not easily be able to extricate myself. But to resolve to discontinue a certain course of reflection, and actually to discontinue it, I found to be totally diverse matters; and so I was left with a secret feeling of happiness—a wholly unworthy happiness I knew it to be—at the thought that I knew more than did my brother of the nature of the girl whose happiness I thought to assure at the sacrifice of my own.

As a matter of course, every one who has read thus far of these self revelations, will have perceived that if I had some knowledge of the nature of Kathleen O'Brian, I had little knowledge of the nature of men and women generally. Indeed, it will not offend me if many who read these pages call me a fool. Truly I should feel that I had written all this in vain if many have not called me a fool ere now. Why, this whole story of mine, so far as it relates to myself, is naught but a tale of a fool—the tale of a blind man's walk, and of the things which he fancied he saw before his eyes were opened.

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CHAPTER XXVI

WHEN Father Mahony failed to return to the Castle on the third day after I had seen him depart in search of the Roundhead Camp, we became uneasy regarding him. Scarce an hour passed without seeing me mount the tower stairs to have another look from the battlements through the long glen if by good fortune I might spy him, in the guise of Kennedy, on his way back to us. It was not until the early morning of the fourth day that my vigilance was rewarded. He came riding rapidly, though not furiously, on the track that led southward, and when I met him at the gate, I was amazed to find that his disguise was as complete as it had been when it deceived me on the night of his departure.

He would not greet us, however, until he had removed every trace of this disguise. He came before us, not as Kennedy, the spy, but as Father Mahony, the priest.

"Evil tidings, evil tidings!"

That was all he said on passing through the hall.

"For God's sake do not say that Wexford hath fallen," cried Harry.

"Do not tell us that O'Brian's Tower hath been taken," said I.

"Wexford hath fallen!" said Father Mahony with bowed head.

We were left staring at one another while he went slowly up the stairs to his room.

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Wexford, which we trusted to hold out against all the forces that Cromwell could march against it, had fallen!

The news had turned us to stone. We could do nought but stare dumbly the one at the other; and I could see that the question which was in the heart of every one of us was—

"How long will it be before the last stronghold shall have fallen?"

If Wexford, the strongest of all the fortified towns, was captured, what chance would the others have which lay in the direct path of Cromwell on his march to the west? There were Clonmel and Limerick and Galway. Not one of them was as strongly protected as Wexford, and yet Wexford had gone down beneath the iron heel that sought to crush the people of Ireland out of the land of the living.

We awaited in silence the reappearance of Father Mahony with the particulars of the dread message which he had brought us, and we were not kept waiting for long. Soon enough we were made acquainted with the terrible story.

"When I said that Wexford had fallen I meant to prepare you for the worst," said Father Mahony.

"Do your words signify more than the fall of Wexford?" asked my father.

"Alas, sir!" replied the priest, "they signify that treachery can lay open the strongest fortress in Ireland to Ireland's worst enemy."

"Treachery, treachery? Do not tell me that Wexford fell by the falsehood of Irishmen," cried my father.

"Would to heaven that it were possible to tell the story of its downfall in another way," said the priest. "Traitors within the walls opened the gates to Cromwell's men knowing that they were

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by that act giving up their brethren—men, women and children—to massacre. Sir, the story of Drogheda was repeated in Wexford."

And then we stood gazing into the red fire of turf in the grate, having no word to say—having no question to ask of the man. What good could come of asking a question? We had all heard of Drogheda. The worn faces and the hollow eyes of two of our household told us more than words could tell of Drogheda. And now we had heard that that horror had been repeated at Wexford. We gazed humbly into the fire and saw therein the flaming houses, and the ruddy depths of the turf seemed to have something of a blood ripple in their quiverings. The story of Drogheda! It was already an old story. We knew that it meant flame and bloodshed—the firing of the houses of harmless citizens, the murder of innocent women and children.

"And now—now?" said my father turning to the priest after a long silence.

"And now the tyrant is in full march for Clonmel—he is even under its walls by this time," said the priest. "And therewith comes the first word of hope that it is given me to speak, for Clonmel is defended by General Hugh Duff O'Neill."

We all looked towards Finola. She had sprung to her feet, and her eyes were flashing through her tears.

"And he will defend it to the last man," she cried. "He will defend it to the last drop of blood in the veins of the last man left within its walls. Treachery—ah, there will be no treachery where my father is! Surrender—my father knoweth not such a word! Sirs, the story of Clonmel will not be the story of Drogheda or of Wexford.

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Clonmel shall have a story to itself and this shall be the story of Cromwell's defeat."

"Amen and amen," said Father Mahony.

"General O'Neill is like the majestic figure that stood between the living and the dead when the sword of the Lord smote the Chosen People, and they lay in files like the grass of a meadow when the scythe hath passed through it—even as the flower of the Irish people lie to-day beneath the scythe of Cromwell. General O'Neill stands between the dead and the living in our land this day. Pray to heaven that the plague be stayed by the uplifting of his hand!"

"He will not fail us. I cannot think that it is the will of heaven to wipe the Irish people from off the face of the land that they love," said my father.

And from the moment that the name of General O'Neill was spoken the horrible depression that had fallen on us after Father Mahony had given us his tidings, seemed to begin to be lifted from us, so powerful an effect may the mere mention of a name have upon a group of people of our temperament. We were all ready to believe that a limit had been set upon the victorious march of Cromwell through the land and we were all anxious to believe that our deliverance from the oppressor was to be accomplished by O'Neill. Within an hour we had ceased to be affected by the tidings of the fall of Wexford; the name of O'Neill was so great that it filled all our minds, leaving no room for any other consideration.

So full were our thoughts of O'Neill we had actually forgotten that Father Mahony had set out on any other enterprise besides obtaining tidings of the defence of Clonmel. The likelihood of an attack being made upon our Castle seemed too trivial a matter to be considered when the air was ringing with the name of O'Neill.

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It was not until we had all broken our fast with Father Mahony, that my father put a question to him as slightly as one asks when rising from the dinner table, if the rain is still falling without.

"Did you succeed in making a discovery of a camp of the enemy, sir?"

"I had well-nigh forgot the lesser points of knowledge that I gained during the past two days, Sir Gilbert," replied the priest with his attenuated smile. "Among the insignificant matters which came to my knowledge was the plan for the seizing of your Castle. It was to be carried out immediately after the taking of O'Brian's Tower. It was not without some difficulty that I brought about a change in the sequence of the plans, and now I have the honour to tell you that Castle Omeragh is to be assaulted by signal within the next two days, and that, as I am to set the Castle on fire in three places when the assault begins, it will be the privilege of our assailants to repeat the incident of Drogheda Church tower, by holding the gate until all the inmates have been reduced to ashes."

"This they call warfare!" cried Harry. "Murderers! We shall hang every Roundhead whom we capture. Are many of the rascals taking part in this scheme?"

"There were but a score engaged in harrowing the country a week ago," replied Father Mahony, "but since the fall of Wexford these have been joined by as many more, who have brought with them four light cannons on tumbrils, well suited for small jobs such as the battering in of a Chapel door or the bombardment of a priest's house. In short, we may reckon to be visited by fifty troopers who have tasted Irish blood and found it palatable, at Drogheda and Wexford, and who are thirsting for more."

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"We can give a good account of fifty, if all goes well," said Harry. But you have only told us of their plans, Father Mahony, cannot you tell us something of yours?"

"'Tis well thought of," said the priest smiling. "I shall e'en spend a few minutes narrating to you my adventure."

He spent close upon an hour telling us all that had happened since he had ridden forth from the Castle in the disguise of the Cromwellian spy, bearing in his pouch the pass which Kennedy had received at the hands of Cromwell himself (as we afterwards learned), together with sundry letters and maps found in the lining of the coat.

He had come upon the camp of the flying squadron of the enemy, and had been at once accepted by them as the man with whom their commander had been in correspondence. Never once, he told us, in answer to our inquiry, had his identification been doubted, though there were at least three of the troop who had spoken face to face with the real Kennedy before Drogheda. He had at all times been treated with contempt—with insult—with every sign of loathing, as though he were Kennedy himself.

We were amazed to learn that a spy was treated with such scant courtesy by the Cromwellians; but Father Mahony told us that they were ever ready to mark a distinction between those of their own army who ventured into the Irish camp as spies, and those traitors from the Irish, who, like Kennedy, had voluntarily come forward to sell the secrets of their own commanders. It made me think better of the Cromwellians to learn that they gave but scant courtesy to the Irish traitors, albeit quite ready to profit by their perfidy.

But disagreeable though his two days among

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our enemies had been, they had enabled him to acquire a complete knowledge of their intentions. The letters which they had received from Kennedy, had, the mock Kennedy discovered, given them knowledge of the weakness of O'Brian's Tower, so they were prepared to make an assault upon it first, awaiting only some details of information which Kennedy had promised to furnish. They grumbled hugely, and a good many of them swore roundly as any of Prince Rupert's men had ever done, when the fancied Kennedy had now to confess to them that he had been grossly deceived in this matter, and had just learned that the Tower was well supplied with ammunition and could probably resist a siege for half a year. He told us that he said to them (what was perfectly true) that he had obtained access to Castle Omeragh, and had found that Sir Gilbert Fawcett and his son had long ago abandoned all thought of being assaulted in their stronghold; so they were living carelessly and the Castle might be taken easily, if only the assault were delivered at the right moment.

Father Mahony repeated to us the manner of the examination to which he was subjected by Captain Taylor, who was in command of the squadron; for the captain declared that all Irish traitors were so bad, that for his part he would believe none of them until he had sifted every statement that they made. So he had sifted the words of the priest—fancying that he was talking to Kennedy—with the result that would be expected by any one aware of the skill of Father Mahony. In contest with the priest this stalwart commander showed himself to be a poor thing. The priest had played with him for over an hour, humouring him at times, and making him feel greatly his own ability as an investigator of the truth and an unmasker of treachery, leading

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him into paths that were full of pitfalls, and so on, until he had revealed all his own plans to Father Mahony, believing all the time that he was striking such terror to the heart of the Irish spy, as compelled him to speak only the coldest truth in his presence.

I confess that I for one was greatly entertained by Father Mahony's narration. The whole scene came very vividly before my eyes. I could see the elderly captain sitting in the kitchen of the farm house which he had made his headquarters, alternately admonishing and abusing the man who stood before him, stammering out his replies just as Kennedy would have done in the circumstances, and now and again contradicting himself in matters of no moment, to administer to the vanity of the officer who would fancy that it was his own shrewdness that was working upon the spy, forcing him to be careful and not to deviate a hand's breadth from the truth. Hereupon he would become garrulous in his vanity and the shrewd priest would advance another step in his knowledge of the captain's plans.

I listened eagerly until Father Mahony had told us all his adventure — that is to say, all that he thought prudent to narrate. I did not doubt that he reserved much that he did not think we should hear, for complete frankness need not be looked for from men who have been accustomed from their youth to weigh their words. The result of his hour spent in the company of Captain Taylor, was the diverting of the plan of assault from O'Brian's Tower to Castle Omeragh—just the matter upon which my father and brother had been conversing immediately after the departure of Father Mahony.

"I have pledged myself to signal to the scouts the most favourable moment for making the assault upon the Castle, and then I am to fire the building, making my escape as best I can. Captain Taylor

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was not greatly concerned about my escape, He contented himself by saying that if I did not escape he would know that I had conveyed to him false knowledge of the carelessness of the inmates of the Castle. If they were truly careless, he said, I should have no difficulty in saving myself. Sir Gilbert, you are in the fortunate position of being able to name the hour when it will be agreeable to you to be assaulted."

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CHAPTER XXVII

THE story of the assault of Castle Omeragh occupies so small a portion of the history of Cromwell's campaign in Ireland, there are not many persons who have ever heard aught of what happened in our glen at that time. Such an incident in a great campaign is as insignificant as the burning of a mud cabin on the hill slope. I have never met but one man who fought on the side of Cromwell who had even so much as heard of our adventure. He was a trooper, who after taking part in the assault, and having a mind for a quiet life, had settled himself down in the town of Kilfinane in the county of Limerick, and marrying the daughter of a substantial farmer in the splendid grazing lands north of the Galtee Hills, had become—for peace' sake after a year or two—a good Catholic, and the father of a numerous family.

But the burning of a mud hut on the hillside means everything to the poor turf-cutter whom it sheltered (indifferently), and the assault upon our Castle meant a great deal to its inmates of every degree, so at the risk of being told that I am dealing with a trivial thing, I will say something of it.

During the two days that followed the return of Father Mahony, we were unwearied in our exercises at the cannons and with the harquebuse. More than once we saw from the battlements of the tower a party of half a dozen mounted men who were clearly acting as scouts for the enemy. They

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appeared suddenly and rode up the glen quite fearlessly until they had come within a few hundred yards of the Castle, when they halted for a few moments, and then went back upon their tracks.

"They are awaiting my signal," said Father Mahony; "but I have made up my mind to delay it, for every day shows a vast improvement in the strength of Master Harry, and to him we look for a spirited defence of our stronghold. Indeed, my good friends, I feel strongly that 'tis a great comfort to one to have it in one's power to choose the time for an assault. An enemy is ofttimes inconsiderate enough to surprise one; but I have arranged this business in another way."

When we were quite ready to receive our enemies, Father Mahony gave his signal. He did not think it necessary to tell us what was its nature, and I do not believe that any one within the Castle could so much as make a guess at it; but whatever it was, it was recognized by the scouts, who rode at a gallop up the glen, whither (as Father Mahony told us) the main body was posted.

This was about noon, and in the evening we who stood at the battlements became aware of the approach of a large body of horsemen, and when they came nearer we perceived that they were in advance of their artillery; they had been persevering enough to carry three culverins, each in a tumbril harnessed to six horses, across the mountains and bogs of the western land to make sure of the work of destruction upon which they had resolved.

It was such acts as this that enabled us to perceive how Cromwell's army should come to be thought irresistible. It was the nature of the great general —and no one will, I think, be foolish enough to deny that Cromwell was a great general—to spare no pains to accomplish his object, so that nothing was

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left to chance. The Irish were overawed by the constant show of force and forethought; but they hated Cromwell all the more on this account, for they really seemed to think that there was something desperately mean about a commander who made war on a fixed principle. They actually seemed to think that warfare was a game of chance, and that the general who left nothing to chance was on a level with the man who examines the cards before dealing them round.

I confess that when I saw the troop riding boldly across the hills followed by the guns jolting over the crags as they had jolted for a fortnight past, I felt by no means so confident that we could hold our Castle against him, as I had been a few days ago. The troop rode loosely, and they were not over well mounted. They were roughly clad, and there was no glitter in their head-pieces or breast-plates. Not spick and span soldiers these, we could see while they were still far off, but labourers in warfare—strong and grimy fellows all, and as such not to be despised by the best fighters in Europe.

My brother Harry did not despise them, nor did our father; for both had fought with them before the murder of the King. Harry, looking at them through the tube of the perspective glass masked by the battlements of the tower, laughed the laugh of the soldier going into action, and clapped his hands in joy.

"They have come at last!" he said, "men worth fighting with. Old Noll may be deserving of hanging without a trial; but—by the lord, he makes soldiers out of the least promising material. Look at those rascals, Watty! What weight to fling upon a body of infantry! Where would the Ulster pikes be in resisting such an onslaught? I tell you, Watty, that with a Bible in their breeches

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pocket and a heavy sabre in their right hand a few thousand of those fellows properly mounted could make the name of England respected in every corner of Europe. Welcome, gentlemen all!"

Father Mahony did not look as if he appreciated the spirit in which my brother had spoken.

"They are the wretches who have made the name of England to be abhorred throughout Christendom," said he. "Butchers of women and children! I tell you, sirs, that the deeds of bloodshed done by those men within the past month will never be forgotten so long as the Christian religion finds a voice in the world. I shall account it the most joyous moment of my life when I see them feeding the carrion crows on the mountain top."

His face was white with that most terrible passion that lurks in the heart of man—namely, religious zeal. He held up a gaunt right hand looking out at that advancing troop and said some words in Latin which I did not altogether catch, but the import of which was plain enough. The priest was pronouncing the curse of the Church upon them.

My brother Harry turned away with an exclamation in French. He was Irish enough to think of warfare in the light of a game, and he looked upon a man who could religiously pronounce a curse upon an enemy whom he was at the point of engaging in battle, as he would look upon a player with cogged dice. The curse, as supplemental to the sabre, he told me he regarded as the equivalent to the dagger of the Italian bravo who scruples not to use it when he is getting the worst of an encounter with the sword.

The priest cursed; but the troop moved on.

They defiled across the glen and took up a position of advantage upon one of the lower slopes, unhorsed, and, squatting among the heather, busied themselves

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preparing their midday meal, lighting fires and unstrapping from the sumpter ponies the camp kettles. But they had not omitted to post their sentinels in the most regular way, and we saw that it would be impossible for any one to leave the Castle without being perceived by them.

Then, while their artillery was crossing the ford of the lough, the captain of the troop and his two lieutenants conferred together, pointing every now and again in the direction of our Castle, and referring to the notes and maps which they held—all having been thoughtfully provided to them by Father Mahony.

And every plan of the Castle was true, but every note referring to that plan was false.

We watched them wheel the cannons into position, and about one of them there was considerable debate among the gunners.

The question, whatever it may have been, was settled by a big sergeant ; the piece of ordnance was swung round and the gunners went leisurely off to join the troopers who were seated on the ground at their meal. They seemed to feel that there was no need for haste in their operations against us. Nor indeed was there any such need. But to such an one as I this cold blooded system of warfare was something of an astonishment. I looked for the battle of the Book of Job, with the shouting of the captains and the din and the whirl, and the tumult ; and lo, there were our foes eating after the manner of herdsmen of the glens—quite as tamely, and taking no particular interest in our Castle. All their interests seemed to be centred in the kettles, and cannikins containing their messes.

Harry saw what was in my mind and laughed shrewdly.

" Those are the rascals that win battles," said he.

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"Such fellows as give all their attention to the making of savoury stews—I can smell the seasoning from here—are those who carry all before them in a charge. If the King's followers had thought more of suttlers than barbers the Parliamentarians would have been shorn off the face of the earth. 'The best leader is the best feeder' was the motto of Colonel Draycott, and 'tis a pity that none of our other commanders held it in respect."

"I suppose it would be a mean thing to do to fire a few round shot among those feeders," said I.

"It would mean the failure of all our plans," said Harry. "When the right moment comes we shall show them what we can do. They believe that we have no cannon among us. I hope that we shall kill a dozen of them before they find out their mistake."

We had resolved to give our enemies a chance of some artillery practice upon us before replying to them. We meant to coax them on to an assault on foot and then to give them such a reception as should satisfy them.

When the three cannons began to play upon us I had another great surprise. I had fancied that it would be impossible for any shot to miss striking the Castle in some place; but the first half dozen shots went right over our heads, and of the next half dozen some struck the mound on which the Castle stood and only one knocked a chip off the battlements; so that whereas I had felt my heart beating fast—I confess it—at the moment when the gunner put his match to the first cannon, yet by the time a dozen echoes of the reports had been clanging sharply about the rocks of the slope and rolling with a rumbling note through the glen, I conceived a vast contempt for artillery fire.

I did not refrain from expressing myself on this point to all who were on the roof of the tower by my

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side ; whereat Father Mahony drew down the corners of his mouth.

"You expect too much, young sir," said he, "therefore you are disappointed. But by the time our friends yonder have been throwing missiles at us for a week, you may be convinced that a cannon ball is an ugly thing."

Just at that moment two of the culverins were fired and it actually seemed as if both shots had struck the selfsame stone of the tower, for the air was filled with the chips of stone and morsels of mortar, and we were enveloped in clouds of dust. Looking over the parapet we could see how huge was the rent made in the breastwork of the tower.

"I do not hold the gunner in so great contempt now," said I.

"But you might well do so," said my brother. "What profit is it to a gunner to dislodge a stone or two in a wall forty feet from the ground—a wall that is, moreover, four feet thick ? 'Tis a waste of good powder."

"You may rest assured that the general had no mind to part with his best marksmen on such an enterprise as this," said my father. "Cromwell knows well that his best men will be needed—every one of them—knocking at the stout walls of Clonmel if they mean to force an entrance before Christmas. Our good friends on the slope yonder are the bunglers whom he could easily spare from his army. They are journeymen gunners who have not yet fully mastered their trade."

"We shall make Cromwell pay for this insult put upon us," cried my brother in mock anger. "I should dearly like to have a shot from my saker at that 'prentice gunner."

"Let not such an impulse be even in your mind," cried Father Mahony in alarm. "What, sir, would

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you ruin our well-laid scheme all in a moment ? "

" But think of the insult of sending a 'prentice hand such as he against gentlemen ; " said Harry, simulating with good effect an increase of indignation. " *Pardie*, Father ! 'tis more than flesh and blood can stand ! "

" I am hungering for dinner," said I affecting a yawn, while the echoes of another discharge rattled around the hills (I had not sufficient curiosity to lean over the breastwork to see where the shot had taken effect. I felt myself to be a seasoned veteran of the wars : had I not been subjected to bombardment for more than an hour ?).

And just then Finola O'Neill climbed up to the roof of the tower, her large eyes sparkling and her fair face glowing with excitement.

" I could remain inactive no further," cried this daughter of a long line of soldiers. " The wall of the Castle was struck by a shot just above my head. They do now and again hit the wall. Am I too severe a critic or are those gunners the very dregs of the Roundhead army ? "

" Clumsy rascals all ! " growled Harry, and I do think that he felt greatly aggrieved that the general had sent against us so indifferent a gunner. " Clumsy rascals ! at this rate we may be under siege for a month."

And there we stood for the next hour watching with a waning interest the practice of the gunners. For my part I had no sense of danger, even when a ball glanced off the smooth surface of a stone in the breastwork of the tower and, flying between my father and myself, struck the inner part of the opposite wall and fell with a hard rattle upon the roof.

Finola held up her hands and laughed aloud with great prettiness. She might have been a child

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looking on while her brothers were flinging pebbles at oyster shells set in a row.

"A narrow escape!" she cried. "Quite a narrow escape! And all the time those fine marksmen are aiming at the door of the Castle."

A little later in the day the gun practice ceased, and there was a consultation between the captain and his lieutenants, after which two of the cannons were wheeled into another position, somewhat closer to the Castle, and the third was trundled down the slope close enough to command the causeway and the gate. It was plain that the captain did not give complete credence to the story told to him by the man whom he supposed to be the spy Kennedy respecting our lack of ordnance, and so he had ordered the bombardment from a distance in order to draw a reply from our cannon, which he thought would certainly come if we had even so much as a demi-cannon. Having apparently satisfied himself that the story was true—for not a shot had yet been fired from our side—he had clearly made up his mind that the weapons might be pushed up to our very door without risk.

"Ha!" cried my brother, when the third cannon, instead of being halted half-way up the slope, was allowed to run to within a hundred yards of the causeway. "Ha! they are surely not coming within harquebuse range! By the Lord Harry! they are tempting us! There is no need for us to mask our small arms, Father Mahony. *Ciel!* See them there within shot of a pistolet. We shall have a shot at them after all. Ready with the matches there!"

He ran to where his own long musket was leaning against the breastwork, and called aloud to Dillon, one of the Castle retainers who had acquired a reputation as a marksman. He had been a sergeant

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in Ormond's own regiment, but had recently been content to act as our butler.

Dillon was not far away. He was ramming home a bullet in his piece, and his smile at every jingle of the ramrod was not deficient in breadth.

"I'm here, your honour," he responded to my brother's call, "I have been waiting for this moment for three years. Will your honour be after sending the gunner to glory, and will I cork the driver?"

"Keep cool—you must keep cool, Dillon," said Harry, and Dillon smiled widely once again.

"Give the word, my captain," said the sergeant in the French manner caught from those of Ormond's forces who had served in the army of the Loire.

They were looking along the barrels of their pieces, resting them on the escarpment while the cannon was being trained upon the gate of the Castle, and it seemed as if a stone were to be dropped from the tower without being flung forth, it could not fail to strike the tumbril.

"Right or left, your honour?" said the old soldier.

"Right," replied my brother, giving his match a shake to make it certain.

"In God's name," said Dillon.

Now there were three men standing by the piece. One was at each wheel of the carriage and a third was sighting the cannon from behind. That was at one instant; the next, the culverin was standing alone. The three men had fallen as though they were but one. Harry had hit the man at the right wheel, Dillon had not missed the one at the other side, and I knew when I aimed at the gunner that his last moment had come; for I too had my shot. I suppose it was the force of the example set by the others that affected me, for when I saw them taking pains about their aim, I had snatched his harquebuse from

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the sentinel, and before I quite knew what I meant to do, I was looking down the long barrel and I actually fired a second or two ahead of the others.

My father was patting me on my back, the men on the roof of the tower were cheering. I was too startled observing the result of our volley to be conscious of much beyond the fact that the three men who had been standing at the culverin were now lying along the ground. Two were lying very still, the third was able to crawl under the cannon.

"Load!" cried Harry, passing his musket to the nearest man, and taking another already loaded that was offered to him by Finola.

Of course I had a fresh weapon almost at the same moment, and the steady old sergeant, smiling more broadly than ever, was casting a critical glance at the men who hastened to take the places of those who had fallen by the cannon.

"Try again, lads," said my father, his eyes sparkling with pride, though I could see that he was doing his best to keep himself under control. "Keep cool, and let them have another dose of your pills."

I suppose we were all somewhat unsteady in our aim this time—for myself I cannot doubt that I was unnerved by my success the first time that I fired, at any rate only one man who had run to the cannon fell. As it so happened, however, the consequences of his fall were of greater importance to us than a repetition of our former success could have been, for in going down headlong he made a clutch at one of the wheels of the tumbril, and getting an arm between the spokes, the weight of his body gave the whole machine a start. The one wheel ran down the slightly inclined ground on which it had stood, and quickly swung the other out of the rut it had made, and before any of the men could lay a stone in its way the carriage was bumping down the

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uneven slope, tearing, first to one side, then to the other, in its zig-zag downward course, gathering fresh impetus every moment until at last the left tyre struck against a crag, and the whole thing toppled over and over once more, the wheel breaking, and the spokes being sent flying like ninepins over the rocks, not twenty yards from the Castle mound.

There the pretty cannon lay with the big broken carriage sprawling over it, a very horror of grotesqueness, the wheel which was still whole, standing awkwardly in the air.

And among the spokes was twisted the sleeve of a soldier's coat.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

WE sent a few parting shots after the men, who retired to their former position up the slope, but they fell short.

"True men! true men!" said Father Mahony. "You have put a gun out of action by a single shot, and that from a simple harquebuse! Such a deed hath not often been overpassed!"

"An accident—the luck was on our side," said Harry with a shrug (learned in France). "The cannon is unharmed. They will send a team to draw it forth after nightfall."

"True; it should be spiked if we are to have the full benefit of the stroke," said the priest.

Now the disabled gun lay in the deep hollow into which it had tumbled after rolling down the slope, and I had a notion that it might be possible to crawl up from the Castle mound into this hollow without being perceived by the men who were behind the dip of the hill beyond it. That was why I made up my mind that the risk to any one attempting to spike the gun would not be great, if the attempt were made at once. I saw clearly that there should be no delay in this matter. It might be saying overmuch to affirm that Cromwell's veterans were panic-stricken by the check which they had received so unexpectedly; but it would be impossible to doubt that the loss of four men and a gun within the space of a few minutes would take some of the heart out of them, and they would

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not be likely to put themselves within gunshot of us for the rest of the day, though after dusk they would of course drive down a team of horses to haul up the cannon from the wreckage that covered it.

I said naught to any one on the parapet of the tower, but went quietly down to the armoury and possessed myself of a few iron nails and a hammer. It would, of course, be too much to expect to find the right utensils for my enterprise ready at hand, for who could have thought that we should be called on in this place of ours to spike a cannon? But I judged that I could do the work with good effect in a plain way.

I squeezed myself through the kitchen postern, which was situated on the opposite side of the Castle to that facing the slope, and quickly went down among the stones that made the ascent of the Castle mound so difficult. But when I crawled round the base of the hill that rose in front of me, I found to my dismay that while I had been selecting my materials in our armoury, the Roundheads had so changed their position that, should I venture to climb the slope toward the hollow in which the cannon lay, I could scarcely hope to escape being seen by them.

I lay face downward on the loose stones at the foot of our causeway, wondering if I would not do well to retrace my steps, when a shot whirred through the air just above my head, and took a splinter out of the Castle door.

It was forced upon me that these men who had been trained by Cromwell were not greatly inclined to yield to panic because four of their number had chanced to fall. They had fully recovered themselves, and had resumed the bombardment from a more favourable position. While I lay there a

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second shot came dislodging some masonry about the lintels of the door and sending a cloud of dust all about me.

But this cloud was not the only one that was in the air. Raising my head I found that the smoke from the cannon had drifted down the slope, and was crawling away among the crags just above where I lay. In an instant I thought that I perceived an advantage to me in this, for the smoke would, in its spreading, stand like a wall between me and my enemies.

Without waiting to consider anything more of my position, I scrambled to my feet and plunged into the sulphurous fumes that clung to the hillside.

Of course I found it impossible to make in a straight line for the disabled cannon. I was forced to dodge about as the smoke drifted, and already it was becoming thin in places, so that every moment threatened to reveal my approach to the men on the hill; for all who were serving the cannons would surely be looking in my direction, and they were so near at hand that I could hear their voices.

I had barely time to throw myself on my face among the thickest clump of heather before the smoke cleared away and two more shots were fired, but with what effect I was not in a position to tell. Then I had to wait to see how the fresh smoke was drifting. I ventured to raise my head, and saw that the cloud was hanging around the guns and the gunners, so that I could not even make out a single group through its density.

And if I could see naught of the gunners, assuredly they could see naught of me.

This was the thought that came to me in that moment, and I lost no time in acting upon its suggestion. I made a rush for the hollow in which

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the wreckage of the gun and its carriage lay, and did not stop until I had flung myself on the heather with the wheel spreading its spokes out above my head.

I waited breathless for some time, fearing that, after all, I might have been seen through a break in the cloud of smoke. But when I heard the report of another cannon I somehow felt more at ease in my mind. I slipped right under the cannon, and felt for the touch-hole, for I had to drive in the iron nail from below, the thing having so completely turned over.

But how should I be able to hammer the iron home without proclaiming my whereabouts?

The thing was done before I had properly considered the risk of doing it. I had to use not one nail, but two nails, but I can swear that I made a good armourer's job of the business, for I contrived to knock off the heads of the nails quite flush with the countersink of the touch-hole as clean as if I had done it with a cold chisel.

I felt that I could do no more. I could only await the next shots and make my escape in the shelter of the smoke.

I waited in vain. For some reason the further bombardment was put off, and I lay there for a full hour, not daring to crawl out of the hollow until the dusk; and yet well knowing that our enemies were just awaiting the dusk to make their attempt to haul off the gun.

The daylight had scarcely changed to the usual evening gray of our glen, when I was surprised to hear the rattle of the harquebuses on the tower battlements. The bullets sang through the air above me, and there came to my ears the shrill shriek of a wounded horse, then quite a volley of oaths, from the hill slope above me. I heard no

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more. A panic possessed me. I sprang to my feet and raced for the Castle, I heard fierce shouts from the hill side, and a fierce fusillade from the loop-holes of the tower, as well as from the roof. I went headlong into the space between the hill slope and the Castle mound, and the instant I regained my feet an invisible hand struck me a sharp cuff on the cheek, and in the masonry above me I heard the spluttering of a bullet or two. But then the postern, which I was in the act of passing on my way round to the one by which I had issued, opened in a flash, and I rushed into the arms of Father Mahony, and promptly dropped breathless into a chair.

"Thank heaven you are unharmed, are you not, my dear son?" cried the priest.

"Unharmed," I gasped. "Quite, except for a smart blow on the face. Who was it that cuffed me from behind and failed to follow up the blow? —a sharp cuff, I swear!"

"There was no one followed you far; but when you were seen, a dozen of those brigands discharged their pieces in your direction; by God's providence you 'scaped only—God's grace, your face—a torrent of blood!"

I put up my hand to my cheek and was amazed to find that it was covered with blood. But certainly I felt no pain whatsoever, and I suppose this struck me as being quite droll, for I lay back on the chair and roared with laughter. But neither Father Mahony nor Finola O'Neill—she had hurried down from the tower—seemed to perceive the drollery of the matter; their faces were quite serious, the priest calling for a basin of water in which to bathe my wound, and the young woman busying herself shredding linen to bind it up.

It did not take long to reveal the fact that my

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wound was unworthy of so much serious attention. The bullet had only torn away an inch or two of the flesh of my cheek. It had missed, by the breadth of a barleycorn, my jaw, but having missed it, there was no need to say anything more on this point. The Castle retainers, however, were not to be restrained by any such considerations of sense and reason, and I found myself covered with gore and glory before my spasm of laughter had ceased. The good priest wiped away the first, and my father's judicious scoffing removed from me the inconvenience of the second; for the over-sympathetic men and women of the Castle service were crowding in on me with a chorus of lamentation, the bourdon of which was that I was a dead man and that it was by the blessing of heaven that the priest was at hand to restore me.

When my cheek was properly bound up by the deft fingers of Finola, it was the priest himself who rated me soundly for my foolhardy act. He declared that I had done my best to frustrate the plan of defence which we had framed. The chief point on which we depended was the concealment of our possession of artillery until the moment came for employing it with overwhelming effect, but had I been hard pressed by the enemy, it would have been necessary, Father Mahony assured me in a voice full of reproach and reproof, to reveal out of due time our secret. The saker had actually been brought to bear on the Roundhead camp, in case of my position becoming desperate. By the providence of heaven, however, only a small body had been detached from the camp to carry back the overturned cannon, and I had been made aware of their approach by that hot fusillade against them from the Castle.

My father also professed to be indignant at my

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act, accusing me of thinking only of myself, being quite disregardful of the fact that every man was needed to defend the Castle, and that no one of us had a right to place his life in jeopardy, seeing how disastrous might be the result of his foolhardiness.

Thus it was that by nightfall I was induced to think of myself as a culprit rather than a hero. I had my moments when I thought that I deserved rather better treatment than I had received; but when I came to ask myself what was my real motive in going forth to spike the gun, I could not but admit that it was a desire to gratify my vanity by performing an act of bravery in the sight of all on the tower; and feeling that this was so, I could not but acknowledge that I had stood in need of the sternest reproof.

At the same time I did not object very greatly when Finola came to me that night, and taking both my hands in her own, called me the bravest man that lived, and affirmed that such a deed as I had done would glow through the pages of history and be sung by bards to the end of time, if it had taken place during the siege of an important stronghold, to which the eyes of people were turned, and not merely in connexion with the defence of an Irish castle in the Western wilds.

"But never fear that I will remember it as long as I live, Walter," said she. "I will tell my father of it when I see him, and you will evermore be dear to me as the dearest of brothers."

I kissed her hands, and felt that, after all, I was not so unlike one of the knights of the old days who had performed a splended feat of arms for the sake of his fair lady.

Only I was beginning to feel somewhat chilled at the manner of address offered to me by my fair

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ladies. Kathleen O'Brian had, I could not forget, called me brother, and kissed me under the protecting canopy, so to speak, of this relationship, and here now was Finola O'Neill assuring me that I should be as the dearest of brothers in her eyes, and I had kissed her hands in the semblance of gratitude.

In reality I did not feel grateful; I only felt chilled.

And the result of all this was that I made a resolution when I lay down to snatch a few hours of sleep that night, that I would have a stern conversation with my brother Harry on the subject of Kathleen as well as Finola. I had no mind to be a brother to both of them. The temperament of such a youth as Harry hath a tendency, beyond a doubt, to multiply the number of young women who are ready to call his brother their brother. But pathetic though this relationship may be, it can be carried too far. Yes, the moment that matters settled down, and we were freed from our enemies, I would insist on having a complete understanding with brother Harry.

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CHAPTER XXIX

"IF men do not fight well to-day they will never appear to advantage," said my father when we got to our posts in the morning.

A more miserable day had never dawned, even in the county of Clare. All the Atlantic Ocean seemed to be in the atmosphere. We breathed of its salt moisture with every breath, and we did not doubt that the men had had enough of it on the hill slope to last them a lifetime. Every man that we could see coming away from the big fires which they had lighted on the slope, carried his own atmosphere about with him for convenience' sake. They were all steaming like their own kettles.

It is on such days as this that peaceably disposed Irishmen living in the Western Counties—nay, even in Tipperary and Kilkenny, both conscientiously pacific regions, will now and then break out in faction fights, being forced into a broil solely for the chance it affords them of getting into a different world. And if the natives feel in such wise, how do you suppose that strangers, accustomed to the genial air of the mid shires of England, would be affected after a night passed on the bleak hill with a long damp glen and a bog on one side and the moaning Atlantic Ocean on the other?

Well, we knew what to expect.

"They will fight like very devils," said my brother, whose experience of the fighting of Roundheads entitled his comparison to be at least received

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with respect. "Yes," he added, "the more pious a fellow is the liker is he to a devil when he fights; and, mark me, there is none fonder of fighting than your pious psalm-singer. We shall have a hard day's work if I know aught of Cromwell's men and their ways."

"And who wouldn't fight to get on the inside of a house with a good fire in the grate this day?" inquired our marksman, Dillon. "But for that matter, any excuse is good enough for a fight. I'm getting a bit blue mouldy myself; but 'tis not too late for me to make up for the time I've lost in peaceful pursuits."

Father Mahony did not disdain to follow Cromwell's rule of addressing his men and rousing them to a high pitch of religious fervour before an engagement. My father has been blamed that, though himself a Protestant, he allowed a priest of the Church of Rome to address the garrison of his Castle, as if the point at issue was merely a question between two religions; but my father was a shrewd man, and knew well that if it came to hand to hand fighting, the men of Father Mahony's flock would do all the better after listening to his address.

But for that matter we were all, I think, filled with religious zeal and fighting fervour when Father Mahony had made his references to the butcheries of Cromwell which he had seen with his own eyes at Drogheda. He explained to the garrison on the tower that he had visited the camp of the men in front of the Castle in the disguise of Kennedy the spy, and that he had learned that the design of Cromwell was to set on fire every Irish castle, and to burn up all the inmates—men, women, and children—as he had burned up the men, women, and children in the Church Tower at Drogheda.

"But by God's help we shall frustrate the design

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of that fiend in the flesh," said the priest, concluding his address. "By God's help we shall tame those savage wolves, as King Reardon tamed his wolves, when the Princes of the Islands of Clew Bay came to ask him concerning his system, and he showed him the fifty grey wolves each with its head lying by his side. 'That is the only way to tame a wolf,' said the King; and now I have told you the only way to tame a Roundhead."

I confess that we, good Protestant fighters, shouted in the Irish fashion, which they say, was learnt from the Danes, quite as heartily as the Catholics, every one of them with "O" or "Mac" to his name, when the priest had given us his exhortation, nor did we refrain from kneeling when he held up his hand in sign of blessing.

But there was in the mind of some of us a doubt if the plan which he had devised with the commander of the enemy's troop could be carried out without an error. It seemed all too simple to succeed with such a practised enemy.

Doubts or no doubts, however, it behoved us to work in agreement with the plan laid down for us, and when we found that, during the darkness of the night, the men on the hill sides had raised for themselves a low breastwork of stones and such earth as the slope gave them—it was not much—in front of the Castle, with embrasures for their two remaining guns, we knew that we had a tough job ahead of us. It seemed as if our enemies had made up their minds to take the Castle for themselves quite independently of the supposed traitor on our side of the walls. It was plain that our excellent marksmanship on the previous day had surprised them—the man who they fancied was the traitor Kennedy had said nothing to them about the marksmen in the garrison—and they had

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thought it prudent to build that breastwork for their protection, for they had approached within easy range of harquebuse or matchlock, and the captain had no wish to run the chance of losing another four of his men.

The bombardment began early, and it was very earnest from the first. Moreover, we were soon made aware of the fact that it would not be safe for us to conduct ourselves as carelessly as we had done before. If we had marksmen among us, our enemies were not found wanting in this respect. One of our retainers—a boy named O'Leary—foolishly stood up on the parapet of the tower to gain some knowledge of the enemy which he could easily have acquired otherwise. He fell at our feet with a bullet in his shoulder.

"His own fault!" grumbled Dillon, who, even on the previous day had been careful to run no risk from the cannon balls. "My throat is dry with yellin' to all of ye to keep well within the stone-work; but ye're all too brave entirely to heed the likes of me."

But with Dillon looking down the barrel of his faithful gun, every man on the other side had great need to take the advice that he gave us. More than once I saw that, when he fired his piece, a man behind the breastwork in front of us threw up his arms. We were all alert.

What a battering they gave us with those two culverins that they had trained upon us! We still show with pride the four iron balls which lodged in the masonry of the tower, and it is scarcely necessary to say that we follow the example of our neighbours in attributing every dilapidation on the Castle walls to the battering of Cromwell's soldiers. I am sure that in the course of time there will not be a castle or a church in Ireland shown to any

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stranger without the story of how it was bombarded by Cromwell's troops in the autumn of 1649.

But to say the truth that day's battering did us very little harm. Our walls were six feet thick in some places, and the cannon which were throwing iron balls against us were very different from those that had made the breach in the walls of Drogheda. To be sure, our great door was being slowly smashed to pieces, but the operation of breaking it down was a slow one, for the oak of which it was made was nearly a foot thick, and it contained thousands or iron studs and bosses, so that most of the cannon balls glanced off upon the masonry about the lintels, sending splinters flying around, but doing very little damage.

I could not help feeling that Cromwell had been right in assuming that only by treachery could he gain access to such a stronghold as ours. The burning of farmhouses and the hanging of solitary turf cutters—these were deeds well within the powers of a flying squadron; but quite another matter was the capture of a castle occupying such a position as ours. Treachery he ever found to be his staunch ally in Ireland.

But now we hoped to be able to rend his forces by the aid of this same ally of his; to see "the engineer hoist with his own petard," as Shakespeare hath it, would be our delight.

Albeit that little injury was being done to our walls by the bombardment on this cold day of dripping mist, we found it very hard to stand still on the parapet of the Castle or at the loop holes of the tower from hour to hour without returning the fire, except at the rare intervals when the head of a gunner appeared above the breastwork of the enemy's works. We all became impatient as the day wore on, and I fear that not many civil words

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passed around us. Harry was most impatient of any of us; he was talking to Father Mahony about making a sortie, and this enraged the priest, and the two seemed to me to be at the point of blows; but the language employed by Harry at this time was but as the innocent bleating of a lamb compared with what he said of the two daring young fellows of our garrison who approached with an offer to attack the Roundheads behind their own defence-work. Harry called them dolts and idiots in English, and then drew largely upon the wealth of vituperation to be found in the French and Irish tongues.

How did they dare to suggest to him a course that could only mean the slaughter of every man that ventured upon so mad an enterprise, and the ultimate butchery of our garrison? he inquired indignantly, and declared that if any man so much as hinted at such a movement he would be shot as a traitor. Then he comforted the brave young fellows by promising them as much fighting as would satisfy the greediest of them later on in the day.

When the men had done shouting at the prospect which he held out to them, he turned to Father Mahony, asking him what the devil he was waiting for now, and if the time had not come for carrying out the grand project.

"Dear son Harry," replied the priest, quite unmoved by his vehemence, "if our garrison be burning for a sortie, you may be sure that in another hour the Roundheads will be well-nigh beyond restraint. They are even now at the point of madness in their thirst for our blood, but in another hour, by the grace of heaven, they will all have become raging mad."

"And then?" said Harry.

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"'Twere foolish to boast, and impious to predict," replied the priest.

But before an hour had passed away every man in the Castle was at the post to which, in accordance with the scheme which we had worked out some days before, he had been appointed. And this is what happened—

At an appointed moment there crawled forth from a loop-hole in the tower a curling snake of smoke; it hung wavering around the masonry, and then began slowly to steal up the walls. Another loophole, and yet another, disgorged its reptile of smoke, and then there appeared the red glow of fire behind one of the windows of the Castle, and a mighty cloud of dense smoke rolling upward from the roof of the tower. With the appearance of these there arose from every part of the Castle a wild clamour, as of panic-stricken men fighting the flames.

And now this clamour was joined in by the Roundheads. They showed themselves, harquebuse in hand, behind the breastwork of their defences, ready for the order to attack. The gunners did not pause in their work. They crashed their iron projectiles as fast as they could fire them against the oaken gate, and at last one seemed to strike the topmost hinge, for the gate was dislodged at the point of its suspension and fell back with a crash against the side of the wall, being now only partially held by its second hinge and one of the chains that traversed it. But the mighty bars that had been bound each side by iron staples had plainly given way beneath the impact of the cannon balls.

Our marksmen might have picked off some of the enemy at this time, for they showed themselves fearlessly, but our desperate condition struck a panic among our bravest, and not a shot was fired

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from a loop-hole. Were we not all too busily engaged trying to extinguish the fires which a traitor had raised within the Castle? already smoke was issuing from the great space made by the falling in of the oaken door.

We could hear the words of command shouted by the captain to his men, we could hear the hoarse bellowing of sacred words, of the powerful tune of a sacred psalm that had done good service at Preston and Marston Moor, and then, singing, shouting, praying like demons, the whole force leaped over their stoneworks and closed in for the rush to our broken gate. They knew that the moment had come for which they had panted. They had only to hold us within the Castle, standing by the gate so that none should escape, and the flames would do the rest.

Now we had taken some rudimentary precaution in the defence of our causeway, such as the piling up of loose stones at places and the raising of a barrier of stout oak with a *chevaux de frise* of nails. These were intended to delay the passage of our enemies for at any rate some minutes. It would also (we hoped) help to concentrate them. But we had no notion that they would pause long enough at these obstacles to allow of their handing over a number of canisters of gunpowder for the blowing up of the door at the further end, together with such portions of the wall as would make a breach for their greater convenience in the assault.

There were at least a score of men at the second barrier—twelve had just climbed over it, and three were atop of the nails, and cursing them like sound Puritans—when Father Mahony gave us the signal by firing his pistolet.

We were ready at that moment. I put the match

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to the touch-hole of my saker, having carefully trained the muzzle for the group of gunners who, with one of Captain Taylor's lieutenants, stood awaiting events just outside their defences; but I never saw what was the result of my shot, for I felt as if a heavy weight had struck me on the body, and I was thrown against the breastwork, though not violently, at the same instant that the roar of the exploding mine of the causeway shook the whole fabric of the Castle. The great explosion was followed by a number of lesser ones; and stunned though I was, I knew that these were from the canisters which had been intended to blow in our walls.

I was struck by some of the wreckage caused by the explosion of the mine.

A man's arm hung over the parapet. I got the impression that some one was trying to climb over, and I sprang up and rushed to meet him on the point of my sword. I recoiled in horror. *There was nothing below the arm.*

By good hap I could see naught of what had chanced on the causeway itself, for all below me and around were horrid clouds of sulphurous smoke and dust so dense that I was well-nigh choked. There was also a disgusting taint on the air of singed flesh, with an odd whiff of burning clothing.

And through all arose a babel of shrieks and groans and moans, and shrill over them the wild voice of some one lilting the Lutheran version of the psalm called the "Old Hundred." I knew within me that that was the lilt of a dying man.

The strain grew weaker and weaker; then of a sudden it rang clear for half a stanza, flaring up as it were, like a torch of song. It stopped . . . a feeble note or two . . . silence.

It actually seemed to me that when the sound of

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the psalm ceased there was silence, for it had absorbed all my attention.

Silence? Yes; about as much silence as there is in pandemonium.

The clamour of fighting men came out of the choking clouds that rolled beneath me, the clash of steel blades upon steel head-pieces, the clang of stones hurled against iron breastplates, and the jingle of back pieces; shouted words of command, stray shots, yells, and what sounded like sobs—all the horrible din of madmen, maniacs fighting to the death; and among all, the baying of a wolf-hound within the Castle yard, and the fierce bark of my own little earth dog. Men and beasts—men and beasts joining tongue in that horrible chorus of massacre.

And in another minute I was in the thick of it. A dozen of us were defending the oaken door against an unknown number of our enemies, and by the time I reached the scene of the fight, that point had been reached when men make clubs of their pieces and sometimes hurl them into the faces of their foes. Pikes and swords were in use; ay, and some fellows hurled crags, and fragments of huge stones that had been dislodged by the explosion at the faces of the men who were climbing up the mound on which the Castle stood. Up from the chasm where once the causeway had been, came the begrimed and begored faces of men, and we drave at them with pikes and swords. We sent them headlong down among the broken stones into that grave where their comrades lay half buried; but still the faces rose ghastly as the faces of ghosts seen in a dream that is loud with moaning, against us. How many of them were there? It seemed to me that they were rising by the score out of the clouds of dust—fierce faces and wild, like to the

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faces of the unholy dead rising to judgment, foul and unrepentant. And we stood above them, stabbing at them, uttering yells of execration when one of them seemed to get the better of us, and yells of exultation when a successful thrust sent one of them backward into the pit.

And then in the snapping of one's fingers the whole thing came to an end. We found ourselves standing at a great distance from the door which we had been defending, gory and panting, and with a thirst upon us that was like to the tearing of a wolf at our throats. We were staring into the chasm, waiting with pike in hand, with sword in hand, for the men that had been rising up from thence against us; but we waited like statues: they came no more.

Some of us flung down our weapons and laughed, as madmen laugh; some of us seated ourselves on the ground and wiped our faces; others stretched their bodies along the ground, and clasping their hands behind their heads, went off asleep through sheer fatigue.

But the faces that looked up to ours from the vile wreckage of the trench were the faces of dead men.

Up the front of the hill slope opposite we saw all that remained of our enemies—a dozen men painfully toiling; and one of them while we looked fell prone on his face, made a struggle to rise, and went sprawling with outstretched arms on the sparse heather. And after that he did not stir. Another sat down on a crag and busied himself in the binding up of a wound on the calf of his leg. Some toiled and staggered like men sore smitten with a palsy. We saw them all, but not one of us had the least thought of pursuit. We had had enough. The lust of slaughter had gone out of our

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blood. We bore our enemies no ill-will at that hour. We wanted only a drink of water and to be left alone.

Suddenly there came a shout from one our men who was sitting on a stone nigh to the northern postern. We turned our heads, making a grasp for the nearest weapon. But all that we saw was a man flying madly across the space between the Castle mound and the hill slopes.

"The foul wretch! He hath 'scaped by some art, but not for long," cried my brother, leaping to his feet and grasping the harquebuse which he had, in good soldier fashion, re-loaded before lying down.

"Nay; let him go," came the voice of Father Mahony. "He is flying to his friends. Let them give him greeting."

Harry turned upon him with a blazing face, when in the act of hurrying forward to have a shot at the fugitive, who indeed was none other than Kennedy.

"Watch his greeting by the friends whom he hath served so faithfully," said the priest grimly.

Harry's jaw fell. He gave a laugh.

"*Pardie!* I had forgot," said he.

Kennedy was tearing up the slope, looking fearfully over his shoulder every now and again. When he saw that no motion was made to follow him he went easier. When he thought himself to be out of range, he turned toward us and shook his fist at us. Then he made a gesture of gross insult, such as peasants make to one another to provoke a fight, and hastened onward.

We could clearly hear the shout that came from some of the little band on the hill when he appeared. One of them ran a few steps to meet him, and raised his piece to his shoulder. A shout from the

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sole officer who had survived made him lower his weapon. They waited for him to come up. We could see that he was exchanging words with the officer—not many—he fell on his knees, but before he had well touched the ground the officer had run him through the body. In another second sword after sword was pinning the wretch to the ground. Then the men kicked his body with their boots, and one of them twisted it about, until it was in a good position, and then with another kick sent it rolling down the slope. It did not go very far. You see the arms flopped about stupidly, and thus arrested its progress.

"Clumsy fool!" muttered Harry, "He should have pinioned the arms first. Faugh!"

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CHAPTER XXX

FINOLA brought us in her own fair hands a mighty ewer of spiced wine, the women of the household carrying beakers—all except those who were binding up the wounds of their husbands and the one who was wailing by the body of her dead son. We drank, beginning with the humblest among us, and so on up to my father. After that there was a babble of many voices.

Of course we agreed that the victory was Father Mahony's. It was he who had taken the disguise of the spy with such good effect that, although our enemies had shown a certain amount of caution during the first day of their assault upon us—they had sought by their bombardment to draw our cannon—yet as we refused to be drawn, they had too readily assumed that the story told to them by the supposed traitor was true, and prepared to obey his signal for capturing the stronghold, which was the appearance of smoke through the windows. It was Father Mahony who had lighted damp turf in braziers in several rooms and made a great bonfire of dry heather on the roof of the tower so as to convey the idea that the Castle had indeed been fired by the traitor within its gates. It was also he who had given us our stations, in view of our final stroke at our assailants, sending Harry with a couple of trusted men to see to the firing of the mine from the kitchen, and posting me at the saker which I

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had long ago trained to command the hill-side end of the causeway. Every one shouted the name of Father Mahony after the fight, and many, with extravagant Irish ejaculations, knelt at his feet and kissed his hands.

(For my part I felt uneasy regarding the escape of Kennedy till Father Mahony had confessed that it was he who had set the wretch free, in order that the manner of his greeting by the men whom he had perjured himself to serve, might produce its effect upon all our household, though I could scarce think that there was a possible traitor among them.)

And now we had some leisure to find out what the fight had meant to us, and what to our enemies.

We had two men killed, one who had been shot on the parapet of the tower, the other run through the body when the assault upon the door was made immediately after the firing of the mine. Our wounded men numbered only six, and of these not one could be accounted in a serious condition. All had suffered by sword thrusts during that fierce assault; the enemy's fire had been altogether harmless, so that in this matter we had actually done better than those veterans of the wars, albeit we had only one veteran among us.

When we set about the task of counting the bodies in the chasm made by the explosion of the mine, we found ourselves face to face with difficulties, so shocking was the mutilation of some of them. I will not dwell upon these hideous matters; it is enough to say that in the trench there were eighteen dead men. (We counted twenty at first, but we found later that we had not apportioned the right arms which we had discovered at a distance, to the mutilated trunks that lay half-buried by the masonry.) Of these eighteen we reckoned that twelve had been slain by the explosion of our

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mine and their own small canisters of powder, and six had been stabbed by our long Ulster pikes. Thus the total loss of the other side was, so far as we could compute, as follows:—

Killed at the cannons by our marksmen	4
Killed behind the breastworks (say) . .	2
Killed by the firing of the mine . . .	12
Killed in the assault following above . .	6
And one man fell down dead afterward .	1
Total . . .	25

Now, so far as we could say, the whole force brought against us was forty-three men; and thus it will be seen that we had accounted for more than half of this number. But of the nineteen who had snatched their lives from us, some were certainly wounded—a few, perhaps, to the death—so that there could be no doubt as to the completeness of our victory.

I may say here that what amazed us most in the happenings of this day was the tremendous force of the assault upon the door of the Castle before the smoke of the firing of the mine had well cleared away. Father Mahony himself said he was sure that no troops in the world would have rallied after so great a disaster as the Cromwellians had done. He added that if he believed it possible for them to recover so quickly he would have thought twice before giving the order to hoist the door off one of its hinges so as to deceive the enemy, leading them to fancy that their cannons had dislodged it. Of course if the mine had failed to explode at the right moment, we could still have protected the door by our saker, until we should have an opportunity of using our harquebuses; but so resolute a force as was attacking us would have made light of such a defence, and lighted the matches in their canisters

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of powder under our very noses, and so made a great breach in the wall.

By good hap, however, every plan contrived by Father Mahony had succeeded, and here we were, dusty and gory, blackened by gunpowder and bespattered by mire, but for the most part safe and sound, and flattering ourselves that we had driven the Roundheads from our door—it might be from our part of the country—for ever. We lay carelessly along the ground, quenching our thirst and exchanging excited comments on various aspects of the fight. Everyone had something to tell—something that he himself had noted—the fierce valour of the Roundhead captain; the cunning of a trooper who had crept up the Castle mound, far away from the door and had thought to take us in the rear. Harry pointed to the grim face of the man looking up to us from below.

For a full hour we sat there, having our bouts of jest, not always at the expense of our enemies, followed by clownish roars of laughter — the least word was enough to send the roar around our company, the briefest exchange of wit met with a more than worthy response on all sides. And some there were who trolled out snatches of songs —fighting songs, drinking songs, and withal a honey-sweet love lilt from one youth with a high voice, that became gradually higher as the lover within him waxed strong, until its ambition was to gain a note that was outside his scale altogether, and this, too, at the tenderest passage. At the cracking of his note there arose a huge shout of laughter, with many barn door imitations of his failure, which he took at first with much chagrin, but later in all good fellowship.

And this was the hour wisely chosen by our bard Cormac to come forth with his harp playing for us

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the inspiriting song of victory of the great Brian over the Danes. The effect of the warlike strains upon our company was amazing. We all sprang to our feet and there really was not a man among us who was not ready to go through another fight as fierce and as exhausting as the one which was just over. We had some boasters among us—for even an Irish garrison cannot be composed wholly of humble-voiced men — and the sound of the harp strings aroused all that was within them. They swore that they had made Cromwell's army turn tail, and that they were ready to treat any other foe, however mighty, in the same way. One might fancy that they and they only had done any fighting that day. But when they shouted for beakers of their favourite drink of native uisque, my father thought that the right moment had come for giving them some work to do.

The suggestion was distasteful to them; work is rarely to the taste of such as these. They professed to be burning to follow the foemen and complete the slaughter that they had begun, but they would not listen to the command to set about the patching up of the great door. Patch up the door! No, they were soldiers; and soldiers, moreover, of the greatest nation that had ever been seen on the face of the earth; they were not base wood-choppers.

My father made great allowance for these three or four fellows who had never before taken part in real warfare—warfare planned and carried out by the brains of men—a very different thing from the tribal squabbles which had given most of our garrison their sole experience of a battle. He laughed at our braggarts for a while; but when he considered that they had gone far enough, he lost his patience, and picking up a pike he thrust it forcibly into the hands of one of them, shouting:

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"Take your weapon and pursue them to the death an' you will. There lies your road—go, and with all the speed you have a stomach for. Stand not there mouthing your threats of all you would do, but go and do it all. Methought you had enough of fighting for one day, but it seems that you are gluttons for glory. Off with you!"

The fellows were somewhat startled by this treatment. They became silent in a moment and, after a foolish pause, one of them said:

"No, your honour, sure brave boys like us wouldn't be so mean as to run away and leave a helpless household here to be the prey of the first band of rapscallions that came nigh. Oh, no; we'll never desert your honour while there's a bite or sup in the kitchen."

And so good humour was restored.

Now there were a good many among us who thought, with the fury of the hour upon us, that we could not be better employed than in following up our victory. But when Father Mahony got scent of this he spoke out.

"Is it possible that you have failed to perceive that the sole aim of our enemies is to get us away from the shelter of the Castle so that they may slaughter us at will?" he cried. "What, do you fancy that those are the men to draw off as they have done while they still outnumber all our force? Is it in your fancy that they are now on their way to rejoin the main body of Cromwell's army before Clonmel? A happy greeting they would look for from their general! Do not be fools. You have gained a great victory, and you can best follow it up by refusing to stir from this spot."

Before nightfall it became plain that the advice,

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delivered in Irish fashion, was the soundest that could be offered to us. We set about patching up the rents in the door and, moreover, we built a screen of masonry to protect it in case of another attack being made. The Cromwellian gunners had taken good care not to leave their cannon behind them, so that we had need to be careful, though, to be sure, it seemed at first as if they meant nothing less than a complete retreat, having been so desperately worsted in the encounter with us. Father Mahony, however, knew the men too well to have so poor an idea of their pertinacity. And so we reloaded our cannon, and furbished up all our other weapons, not omitting those which we had captured from the enemy, and awaited the next move.

That night was one of clear starlight; a stranger might have been led to believe that rain was rare in our region. We were all alert on the roof of the tower, but be assured that there was plenty of grumbling that night. It was not at all like the good old times, we were told, to refrain from celebrating a great victory by a wassail. There were among us some who could remember the glories of a carouse or two on the night after quite an ordinary fight between the followers of the Geoghegan and those of the MacDermott, and they feared that such good days were gone for ever, when so noble an achievement as ours was to be followed by a night of strict vigilance.

"The good old days!" said Father Mahony with a smile that had something of fierceness about it. "The good old days when a day of victory was followed by a night of wassail, and that by a morn of massacre! Pray Heaven such good old days have passed away for evermore. There are some about us in this place who would sit down to a carouse albeit that our foes are waiting beyond the

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side of the slope of Carrigdhu till the hour comes to renew their attack upon us. They have not yet learned that this siege is to be maintained on a principle new to Ireland and the Irish. We have no notion to lose in a night's carouse all the advantage that we have gained by the day's true fighting."

Of course every one with judgment perceived that he spoke with sound sense; but when he insisted on placing sentinels in ambush outside the Castle, with orders to discharge their pieces at any man whom they might see approaching the gate, I for one felt that for the first time in Ireland, the invaders were being fought with their own weapons.

Sergeant Dillon and I had the honour of being set in this ambush to guard the garrison against the possibility of an attack, and although we both came to the conclusion, after a brief conference, that the survivors of our enemy would feel that they had had enough fighting for one day, and therefore pass the night in repose, yet before morning we had a proof—if any were needed—of the stuff that these fellows were composed of.

I confess that I was nodding, though I swear that I had not once dozed, as I sat among the wreckage that I had piled up as a mask at one side of the great door; and I had found it needful to begin to count the stars that were twinkling between the straight line of the tower and the sheer face of the cliffs—I had oft found the practice of star-counting useful when I had been holding a vigil awaiting a shot at a stag. Suddenly there came between my eyes and the stars something that did not quite convey the idea of a cloud.

I had no further need to number the stars in order to keep myself awake. I was as wide awake as I had ever been in my life. A short interval and there was a second obscuring the stars—then a

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third, and this time I was able to make out the dark figure of a man, moving between the stars in the handle of Charles' Wain, and the three in the belt of the Hunter.

"Hist! Hist, Dillon!" I cried scarce above my breath.

"Whist! I see them," he responded.

My companion, who was deeper in the hollow, was as vigilant as I, and I was assured that he saw, as now I did, that the figures of the men which had been upright when first seen, were crouching as they crawled down the side of the hill.

I put a grain or two of fresh powder in the pan of my fire-lock—it was one of the wheel-locks captured from the enemy—and awaited the right moment to fire, for whatever these stealthy movements meant, they meant no good to us.

(It was strange, I thought, that at this time my heart should be beating more violently than it had beaten even when the fight had been fiercest.)

For some minutes I lost all sight of the men on the hill; and it was a great strain upon me to wait for the moment when they should be at the point of descending into the trench, if they meant to cross to the great door. And when at last I heard the slight rattle of a pebble far to the right of where I was hidden, and turned my eyes in that direction it gave me a start to see that three men had already got down to the edge of the trench—I could just see the curve of their head-pieces among the stars. Had it not been for the rattle of that dislodged stone they might have crossed to the Castle mound while my eyes were turned against the opposite slope.

As it was, however, I brought my weapon to a solid rest, and then, with my finger on the trigger, shouted out a challenge. It had the instantaneous effect that I looked for; the three men stood upright

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for a moment and at that moment I fired at the body of the one nearest to me. I felt that I had missed him altogether; and, sure enough, I saw him throw down something that he had been carrying, and make for the slope. Then Dillon fired, and the man went forward on his head.

Forthwith there was a great clamour on the tower, and half a score of shots were discharged, but only (as I afterwards learned) in the air; my brother, who was in command on the roof, had given the order for this so that the prowlers might believe that we were ready to go against them in force, supporting our sentinels. A brisk response came from the hill side, and some shots passed so close to me that I knew the fellows had marked the direction whence my fire had come.

Dillon and I lost no time in retiring to the protection of the gate. We felt that we had earned an hour or two of sleep; for we judged that no further attempt would be made that night to blow in the door by the aid of a bag of powder and a slow match. We found in the trench the next morning the bag of powder and also the slow match, and once again we gave praise to the discipline of Father Mahony.

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CHAPTER XXXI

WAS it any marvel that all within the Castle, excepting, it may be, Father Mahony, were amazed to hear the sound of the enemy's cannon at dawn? Surely after the way they had been beaten the previous day—after the failure of their attempt to catch us napping through the night, it was not going too far to expect that they should feel some discouragement.

But there they were behind their breastwork defence on the slope, to all appearance as ready to resume the defensive as if they had never known a reverse.

"Cromwell's way!" said Father Mahony.

"Ay, and the way of every general that ever got a name for being a gainer of victories," said my father. "That was the way with Drake and Raleigh and all the captains of the days of Queen Bess, when they turned the ships of the Armada of King Philip into floating hulks. That is the English way!"

Harry showed that he felt somewhat indignant to hear this praise of the English.

"Let me dare to say that the English have no more right to call this exasperating mode of fighting their own than the French have," said he. "Ay, or the Dutch, who, I think, favour it most of all. But for my part, I would rather have a defeat in the ranks of Prince Rupert than a victory among the Cromwellians."

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The priest, who heard this exclamation, shrugged his shoulders saying, in French—

"Everyone to his taste. Me, I am on the side of the victors, I thank Heaven daily that there is no Prince Rupert within this Castle."

I do not think that Harry felt greatly that the priest had any reason for thanksgiving in regard to this point. I fancy that Harry thought that he was capable of playing a good second to Prince Rupert.

Possibly this was why he affected to be a-weary of the monotony of the defence of the Castle, for his voice was shortly afterward heard coming from below attuned to the lilt of a French chanson, with the silvery twanging of his lute between the verses.

My father laughed as one that hath been young and, having a memory of those days, is easily tolerant of the little vanities of youth. But Father Mahony did not smile. On the contrary his face assumed that look of lowering with which both Harry and I had been familiar in the old days when we had forsaken the study of French irregular verbs in favour of a day's otter hunting. Our tutor would never accept the explanation that we were acting in the true spirit of irregular verbs by studying them irregularly. His brows lowered while he said:

"Lute-strumming at a girl's feet when he should be doing his duty with the other men!"

"The young jackanapes took your slight to heart," said my father. "He hath still some of the vanities of youth left, though he be over twenty; and then—well, the girl hath shapely feet."

"Would to Heaven they had borne her otherwhere than to this Castle," cried Father Mahony, apparently forgetting for the moment how it was that Mistress Finola had come hither. "Would to Heaven I knew a way to direct her feet into other paths! She hath no business here."

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"Nay, my friend," said my father cheerily, "I have still a voice in the coming and going of my guests, I would fain hope, and I say that the girl is welcome so long as she choose to stay. And I affirm that her feet are the shapeliest that I have seen on the Castle stairs for many a year. A girl's feet on the Castle stair are as beautiful as the feet of them that bring good tidings are upon the mountains. But that is no reason, sir, why you should not rate that young jackanapes for his impudence."

Father Mahony did not need to have such a suggestion made to him a second time.

"Be assured that I will not shrink from that duty, sir," said he. "List to that new song—a love-sick strain of the French poet, Chastelard."

"And I will say that Master Harry sings it with true tenderness," said my father.

Father Mahony said something that had the sound of a hiss in one of its syllables, and then turned on his heel and went down the stairs to the apartment which had been our mother's bower, where now sat Finola O'Neill with Harry in every sense at her feet. The door of the apartment was wide open, so that I did not need to play the eaves-dropper: I could hear every note that was sung, and, later, I could hear every word that passed between my brother and the priest. In the meantime however, I heard another sound: namely, the crash of a cannon ball upon the wall very nigh to the window beneath which Finola sat.

The chanson went on just the same. Harry sang in perfect tune, and my father only did him the barest justice in respect of the tenderness of his expression.

Tenderness was not the prevailing note in the words spoken by Father Mahony when he reached the room. That was ever the way with a priest, someone said long ago. If once he be allowed to

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exercise some authority in a house, he will not rest until he become the master of the master. Father Mahony had, however, done so much for us during the past month—he had in particular done so much for Harry himself—that he surely deserved better treatment than Harry vouchsafed to him.

Moreover, the priest had not merely right and justice on his side. He had propriety as well; for was it not little short of a scandal that Harry should be sitting there—as he had sat more than once before, with his lute on his knees, and his eyes fixed upon the face of a girl who was not the one for whose sake he had first gone to the wars—the one in whose eyes I had seen (as I thought) the light of love shining when he had come into her presence?

The priest was in the right. All my sympathies were with him, and I felt more than angry with my brother for that air of nonchalance with which he received the remonstrance of the man who had done so much for us all.

When Father Mahony strode into the room Harry, having come to the end of his chanson, began screwing up the strings, saying to Finola: "Now you shall have your favourite, 'Un Jour d'Amour,'" and without so much as glancing in the direction of the priest, passed his fingers across the strings, and assuming the expression of the lover who sings to his mistress, began that cooing song which he told us was a great favourite at the Louvre.

But Finola was too polite to sit by while our best friend was being treated so curtly. She made a motion with her hand to Harry, interrupting him.

"I have no great mind to hear that nonsense at this time, sir," said she. Then hastening to where Father Mahony was standing, his face white with anger, she added—

"I have already told him that this is no time for

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fooling in French, sir. If my father were here he would have him punished for leaving his post."

Thereupon Harry flung his lute upon the cushioned seat beneath the window, and went out of the bower in a rage, and a silent one, which is ever the worst sort of rage, I think.

Father Mahony, when alone with the girl, shut the door, and I believe that he gave her, though she did not deserve it, a scolding for having so much as listened to the singing of the first chanson. Indeed, I caught sound of the word "Traitress!" more than once; and when I next saw Finola, I had no trouble in perceiving that she had been weeping.

Nevertheless before an hour had gone by we were all good friends again. The sound rating which our father bestowed upon Harry did much to promote a general peacemaking, especially as Harry replied to him with great vigour at first, but decreasing in vehemence until at the last he had not a word to say. He was a brave enough man to own himself in the wrong to Father Mahony and to ask his pardon, which the priest granted with a fine air of authority. At another time he asked pardon of Finola for his fit of temper, and I saw her give him her hand to kiss—a thing which angered me, believing as I did that she was encouraging him, though all unwittingly, in his disloyalty to Kathleen. So great was my desire (I fancied) that Kathleen should be happy, that I felt quite vexed that Finola had forgiven him. I had hoped also that Father Mahony would have taken the opportunity offered to him of telling Finola how matters stood in regard to Kathleen, for I was assured that he knew well—had he not confessed as much to me?—why it was that I had set out for the Bay Colonies of America.

However, here we were all friends once again, and ready to give our undivided attention to the enemy.

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Well, they battered at us with their cannons and we replied with ours, but only for a short time, for we had no great store of powder or cannon balls, and the Roundheads gave us no chance of getting a missile home among them. But if we did them little harm, assuredly they failed wholly to disturb us. They knocked a chip or two off the stones in the face of the tower, but that was all. It was scarce worth their while coming so far and at so great pains, to accomplish so little, my father said, and we were all very well satisfied with ourselves.

We could not understand why that remnant persisted in the siege. We had proved to them that they could do us no harm worth a complaint, and yet there they sat wasting their powder and shot.

"We must be misers with our powder," said Father Mahony, shaking his head at the close of the day's firing. "We must await the worst: 'tis as I feared; they have been promised a strong reinforcement, and they mean to sit there until it comes."

"They can have no reinforcement until Clonmel has fallen, and my father is defending Clonmel," said Finola grandly when Father Mahony had given us his opinion.

We all cheered her words with great heartiness, being sufficiently Irish in our nature, though bearing an English name, to believe that that would come to pass which we hoped would come to pass.

But as it appeared, the priest was right in his conjecture. On the eve of the second day after he had suggested the coming of a reinforcement, the reinforcement came. I saw them in the early dawn—a score of stalwart fellows well mounted and having six pack horses; they rode at ease through the glen and made straight for the encampment of the remnant who had saved themselves from the disaster that befel their comrades.

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Perhaps some hearts among us may have failed at the sight of this new enemy; but Finola's was not among the number.

"We shall treat them as we treated the first," she cried, "and if any one dares to say that they are here because Clonmel has fallen I will shoot him with my own hands."

Her brave heart made all our hearts brave—Harry's bravest of all.

"I will let those fellows see what is our quality," he cried, loading his demi-cannon not with a ball, but with a huge charge of bullets and old scraps of iron, with a nasty nail or two. "I would fain hope that the message which I shall deliver to them will be read aright by them."

When the right moment came he fired his cannon and with good effect. His aim had been somewhat low, and had he fired a ball it would have missed altogether; but the loose charge scattered, and it seemed that at least half the number of horses felt the sting of some missile. Three were struggling on the ground and the remainder started off in the fury of a panic, beyond the restraint of their riders. Four men were on the ground after the firing of that shot, but two of these managed to get upon their feet, and to march slowly off throwing an arm over the pommel of a comrade's saddle.

Harry was the hero for the rest of the day.

That night a combined attack was made upon us; but not a man of our garrison left the Castle, though, as before, there was some talk of a sortie; but my father would not countenance such an enterprise. It would, he said, be time enough to talk of a sortie when we had reduced the number of our enemies by a moiety. We brought our guns to bear upon the attacking parties as well as was possible in the dark, but the result of the night's operations was,

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to say the least of it, not in our favour. To be sure our garrison had suffered no hurt, but the screen of masonry which we had raised to protect our door was blown up and a breach was made in the door itself which could not be repaired with such material as we had within the Castle.

From the moment that the bombardment ceased until the dawn we were engaged at that door. We tore down every door within the Castle and fastened them with beams and chains athwart the breach; and behind them we piled all the heavy articles of furniture, filling up the space to the wall. But we knew well that although those obstacles would impede the entrance of the enemy they would not prevent it. Still we thought that we were justified in believing that in the desperate case of a hand to hand fight within the hall of the Castle, we could give a good account of ourselves.

We had no sleep all that terrible night. What was in all our minds was that everything depended upon the events of the coming day; and I suppose it was but natural that there should be gloom in some of the faces that the grey dawn-light showed when we had finished our travail.

I looked out by a loophole. There was a cold sea mist rolling down through every hollow in the hill side, and every now and then a black rock would appear among those billows as an island appears among the billows of the ocean. But with the rising of the sun over the hills that formed the other side of Glen Omeragh, the white vapours became penetrated with light and vanished before our eyes. The whole valley shone green and beautiful in the moist atmosphere.

Then it was that I cried out in my surprise, for with the vanishing of the morning mists, our enemies, too, had vanished—as silently and as certainly.

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CHAPTER XXXII

WE had expected to hear the rattle of the cannon once more at the first streak of dawn, and to see the red fire of their throats through the mist. But no such sound came to our ears; the cannons had disappeared from the breastwork defence just when, as it seemed, they would be of the greatest use to our enemies! The camp on the hill slope where the horses had been hobbled was struck. There was no sign of horse or man on the hill!

"What doth it mean? What doth it mean?" was my cry, and the cry of many another who looked forth from window or loophole on that morning.

"What should it mean except a stratagem of war?" said Father Mahony. "Our enemies are desirous of drawing us into a trap for our undoing; but in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird. It is for us to remain here and never so much as entertain a notion of stirring forth. That is the true reply to such a manœuvre as they have devised."

"Do they take us for raw wood-kernes?" cried Harry. "Peste! they take back the compliment they paid us when they got up their reinforcement. 'Twas handsome on their part to suggest that we were a redoubtable foe; but now they assume that they can lead us into a trap as though we were peasant hinds."

Our father said nothing for some minutes. At last he began to whistle, and then called hastily for breakfast.

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We were quite prepared for something cheery from him. But I could see that if he were to hint at the likelihood of the Roundheads having marched off in good faith, he would be scoffed at.

He seemed to have an idea in the same direction, for when, after his whistling, a number of faces looked at him enquiringly, he said—

"Well, 'tis sure an easy matter to sit still. Have we not had a busy enough life for a week past?"

There were a good number of us who guessed that it was his intent to hint to us his belief that our enemies had struck their camp for ever; but as I have said, we were all prepared to combat the obstinately cheerful view which he took of the thing that had happened. Under the tuition of Father Mahony we had become marvellously un-Irish within the past few days. We were now all far-seeing veterans in warfare, being evermore prepared for the worst and refusing to interpret as favourable to ourselves any movement of our wily foes.

So we became more vigilant than ever this day, and set about the repairing of our door in good earnest, though we had to stir a huge mass of the furniture which we had spent the night piling behind the breach made in the assault. And all the time that we laboured we were awaiting a sudden swoop down upon us. We worked as did the Jews when rebuilding their Temple, with a sword in one hand and an implement of labour in the other. But we got the work finished without being disturbed.

"After all, I am left with but a poor opinion of the sagacity of those rascals who have been annoying us," said my father when we came up sweating from the work, and, if the truth must be told, more than a little disappointed that we had not been molested during the day. "What strategists are

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these that fail to follow up the advantage which they gain during the night? What is left for us to think of such assailants as give their enemies full time to repair the breach which they themselves have made by dint of hard fighting and not without the loss of life? Paltry fools! Paltry fools! School boys playing the game 'King of the Castle.'"

"Nay, sir," said Harry, who seemed burning with zeal to show that there was nothing of the recklessness of Prince Rupert in his nature. "'Tis good strategy to make a pretence of neglecting a great opportunity in order to strike a crushing blow."

"You have read your books, on the strategy of arms to good purpose," said my father, and he spoke no more at that time.

But I could not help thinking as the day wore on, that if the strategy of which we were having an example was the best that the Roundheads could show, they had won their renown in warfare very easily.

We waited and watched for the next two days, none of us so much as stirring outside the Castle, lest our crafty foes should swoop down upon us as the sea eagle swoops down upon its prey, albeit we were at our wits' end to guess where they might be in hiding; for, indeed, the region round about our Castle did not lend itself greatly to the concealment of a force of men—at least not within an effective striking radius. We waited and watched, and on the third we held a council of war, the result of which was that my brother Harry and I drew lots to determine which of us should ride forth at nightfall and in all secrecy to try to obtain some knowledge of the whereabouts of our enemy.

The lot fell upon me, and I was glad of it, for

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Harry had not yet recovered all his strength, and it might be necessary to ride far.

I mounted my pony, having received my instructions—not without much admonition to be cautious—from Father Mahony, and never to be venturesome from (of all people in the world) my brother Harry, and rode forth by the light of a young moon. I had mapped out my routes so that by following them in due course I should gain a complete knowledge of every quarter, north, east, south and west, so that if the Roundheads were preparing themselves to strike a blow at us that should be final and irresistible, I should learn of it in time to frustrate them.

I confess that I felt all the joys of freedom after the long days of confinement within stone walls. I had an inclination to shout while my pony breasted the slope of the hill and I only restrained myself by an effort. I suppose it would have been thought that I went beyond the boundary of caution had I given way to my feelings, so I had perforce to content myself by letting my too fresh pony express my feelings by a long gallop when we came to a level ground. After the first burst I rode more delicately, satisfying myself that at least Glendhu contained no enemy. The glen was silent beneath the cold stars of night, only the wild mallard, the grey plover and the curlew spoke to me as they were accustomed, and once I heard the bark of a fox, which in the Irish tongue is the red dog; and once the howl of a grey wolf.

Early in the morning I broke my fast by the side of the brook where Kathleen and I had seen Corporal Appleyard and his merry men at their meal—the last they had eaten in this world. It was a cheerful morning and I made a good breakfast off the remains of a cold pasty which I had brought with

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me, but I did not drink aught of my horn of wine; I had thirst only for the water of the stream.

Then it was that I began the search for a new trail. If the Roundheads had truly said farewell to us they would retire by the track which led southward at first and then to the south-east, keeping away from the walled town of Kilmallock, and so on in the direction of Clonmel. If, however, it was their intention to continue the work of devastation and burning which they had pursued, just to beguile the tedium of their march to the serious business they had in hand, they would probably take the Ennis road for a day and then make a curve to the west. In either case, they would, I was convinced, pass along the southern track, and there it was I made a wide search for their trail.

My search was rewarded after an hour or two. I had since my boyhood plenty of practice in bringing forth my skill in trail-finding, and before I was twenty I could read the mountain-side and the forest as one reads a book; so that I had no trouble at this time in gaining the knowledge that more than a score of Tipperary horses—very different from our Clare ponies—had passed along the southern track within two or three days. Little trouble had I in discovering the spot where the riders had dismounted for their meal. I found, too, that they had ridden with great despatch, for they had not lighted fires at this place: later I came upon the place where they had encamped. This place was fully ten leagues from Castle Omeragh, so that in my mind there remained no doubt that the men who had been besieging us had set their faces to the south, and were riding in hot haste in that direction.

That was all that I knew with any measure of

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certainty. The mystery of the disappearance of the men from the slopes of Glen Omeragh, just when they had made their first step toward success in the emprize that had cost them many lives and much travail, remained a mystery. Nothing that I had observed tended to reveal it to me.

I puzzled over the matter half the night, lying awake on my heather bed, but the morning came without affording me any solution of the matter beyond that suggested by the merest conjecture. And, strange to say, the first impression of which I became aware on learning that our enemies had left us, having no intention of returning immediately, was one of disappointment. I actually felt grievously disappointed that no further opportunity would be given to us of showing those redoubtable troops of General Cromwell that we Irish could beat them back from our doors. Of course it could not be denied that we had beaten them back, since the remnant that had snatched their lives from us were now in full flight southward, but at the same time, I knew that they had not left us solely because we had got the better of them in an encounter.

I was greatly chagrined to think that our fighting was over, for some time at least (so bloodthirsty may a man of peace become in the course of a brief campaign).

I spent the greater part of the next day following up the trail in order that I might learn whether the fugitives—I liked to think of them as fugitives—had gone in the direction of Clonmel or were inclined to make for Limerick. It was high noon before I had satisfied myself on this point; they had kept on to the south-east and thus were striking for Clonmel.

The moment that I turned my pony round my thoughts went right about also. No thought of

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warfare remained with me. It seemed as if I had been reading a book and had come to the end of the chapters dealing with strife. All my thoughts now turned to Kathleen O'Brian. I was filled with a great longing to see her face to face, and to tell her all that had happened since we had been together on that day of peril.

But when I set out to think on some happenings that concerned her closely, my heart sank within me, for I knew that it was laid on me to tell her first of all that my brother Harry had returned. There had been no communication between Castle Omeragh and O'Brian's Tower since his return, so that she could know nothing of it, though doubtless she would have learned how we were beleaguered.

How would she take the news of Harry's return?

Surely there was only one answer to this question. Thinking all that I did respecting Harry and Kathleen, I had no choice except to believe that she would be overjoyed at his return.

But remembering the light that I had seen in Harry's eyes while singing his chansons at the feet of Finola O'Neill, I could not but feel that a great unhappiness was in store for her. And I, who had, a year ago, fled to England and thence to America, so that I might save her from the unhappiness which threatened her at that time—I was the one on whom it was laid to give her such knowledge as could not but mean trouble to her; for how could I tell her that Harry had returned without telling her the manner of his return, and how could she learn the manner of his return without knowing that his unstable heart must long ago have passed into the keeping of the beautiful girl whose escape from her fetters he had brought about—the beautiful girl who had been by his side in the ship's boat for several days?

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I felt more than a touch of melancholy as I thought over every point in our position, but after a day's ride back upon my tracks I had become resolute upon two matters — the first was that whatsoever might happen, I would not add to Kathleen's burden of trouble by confessing to her that I loved her; the second that I would never again call Harry my brother if he brought unhappiness upon Kathleen. It was in his power (I thought) to make her happy by showing that he was true to her. If he had erred for a brief space from the straight path of fidelity, I knew that she would make allowance for his nature, and easily forgive him. She would not remember against him that lapse of his which had caused him to sit singing his chansons at the feet of Finola.

But then there came the question of Finola, who, I was persuaded, loved Harry and had no knowledge of his obligations in respect of Kathleen— what would become of Finola?

At this point in my attempt to disentangle the double knot of the love affairs of my fickle brother I pulled myself up. I spoke out some profane words in the still air of the glen, which were in substance a declaration that I would trouble myself no further with the affairs of my brother. I would let matters work themselves out in their own way. Who was I that I should undertake to act the part of Providence in regard to these people? Yes, I made up my mind that I would shrug my shoulders and play the part of a passive onlooker in the future.

And then I rounded the bluff and came in sight of O'Brian's Tower.

It is scarcely necessary for me to say that no obstacle was offered to my entrance to the Tower

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by the postern where some weeks back I had seen a sentinel placed. I strode into the dining hall and found it empty. There was no sound throughout the Tower.

A terrible thought took hold of me. Was it possible that the second force which had ridden through the glen, had come by the Gap of Dunboyne and had delayed only for an hour or two at O'Brian's Tower—an hour or two would be ample for the murder of all the inmates ?

I fell into a chair overwhelmed by that thought. Never before had I known how much I loved Kathleen. In that moment I perceived the truth ; if she were dead there would be nothing left for me in the world. In that moment I cast to the winds every consideration that had previously prevailed with me—that fancied loyalty to my brother—that desire to sacrifice myself and my own love for his sake. I no longer sought to pamper my vanity as the noble Romans pampered theirs, seeking only to have a consciousness of their own magnanimity. I covered my face with my hands crying aloud—

" O my darling ! my own sweetheart ! gone from me for evermore ! "

I know not how long I sat with my head bowed under the force of that blow which had fallen upon me, but when I looked up Kathleen was standing at the entrance to the hall.

With a cry of rapture I sprang to my feet and flung my arms about her, kissing her all over the face and in my impetuosity calling her all the endearing names that came to me in the Irish tongue.

So impetuous was I that for some time I was actually unconscious that she was kissing me in return, and weeping upon my shoulder. When at last I became sensible of this astounding thing

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I tried to bring myself to stammer the exculpating word "Sister."

I failed.

"What is it that you are trying to say, Walter?" she said when I had placed a hand upon each of her shoulders, and was looking down into her sweet face and liquid eyes.

"I was trying to say—but I will try no longer," I cried. "Listen to me, Kathleen, while I call you my darling, my sweetheart—the one whom I have loved since I knew what it is to love."

"And how long ago is that, my Walter?" she asked with a certain pointed demureness that ever sat well on her.

"How long?—you ask me how long? Oh, Kathleen, despise me as you will—call me traitor an you will, I swear to you that I have loved you for years—yes, for years—long before Harry came."

"Then I do call you traitor—yes, traitor to me—traitor to true love; for you never told me aught of this."

"I thought that the time would surely come when I should see the love light in your face, dear; and then I should be able to tell you all that was in my heart. But that time did not come—instead of it Harry came from France and took you from me, and now—now he is back again—he is back again!"

"What—what?" she cried. "Harry back again? No, no; that is impossible!"

But the next moment showed her that it was more than possible; for my brother himself marched into the room, and then stood staring at us. I had a hand of Kathleen's in one of my own, my other hand was about her waist.

I had become defiant.

"What do you here?" I cried. "You may have

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come back but you will not get her back. I tell you that I defy you. Once before you came between us but you will not do so a second time. Go away! we were happy until you came! Do not go to him, Kathleen. He is not to be trusted with so precious a treasure as your love. I tell you that he loves the girl whom he brought back with him in the boat. He loves Finola O'Neill."

I spoke with fierce indignation, and I expected to see him quail beneath the accusation that I hurled upon him.

He did not quail. On the contrary he burst into a fit of laughter, holding his sides and throwing back his head, till he seemed the incarnation of the spirit of Levity.

Then Kathleen spoke.

"Hush, sir," she said reprovingly to Harry. "This mirth of yours is unseemly—'tis well-nigh disgraceful."

He straightened himself in a moment, and bowed in his best French style.

"Madam," he said, "'tis just a year ago since you confessed to me that 'twas my brother and not I who was the fortunate one in winning your affections. You bound me down to secrecy at that time, telling me that the day would come when the scales would fall from his eyes and he would know that you loved him. Prithee, sweet Kathleen, hath this happy time just come?"

"Yes, sir," she answered, "it hath come and 'tis the happiest day that my life hath known. And let me tell you, Master Harry, that a woman hath a better chance of happiness with a man who confesses his love tardily than with the one who makes haste to swear to every one with a fair face—ay, and many a one of the other sort as well—that

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he loves her. Therefore it does not become you to mock your brother."

Then she turned to me saying—

"Dear Walter, there is no man that lives who is so true to the truth of true love as thou art. That is why we shall be happy for evermore, and no doubt of thy love shall ever come to me."

She was in my arms in a moment. The scales had indeed fallen from my eyes, and I perceived that I had been—no, not a fool: 'twere cruel to call a purblind man a fool because he maketh a blunder.

And now it was that Harry showed how excellent a spirit was in him, for the moment that Kathleen had recovered some of her breath—though indeed she was still very rapid in her breathing—he bowed before her low and gravely, saying—

"Sweet lady and sister, you were ever in the right, and I owe to you as much as doth my brother. Dear Kathleen, 'tis now more than a year past that you read me a lesson which 'twere wholesome for every man to learn. I had from you, sweet Kathleen, my first lesson upon the theme of true love; and I, who had before thought of it with all levity and lightness, came to learn how great and pure and holy a thing it is. It was you, madam, who gave me in your own sweet self such an ensample of that faith, which sure is heaven's best gift to us poor men, as influenced all my life; therefore, dear sister, I offer you all the devotion and worship of which this soul is capable."

Kneeling then on one knee, after the manner of the French gallants and many English as well, he kissed my lady's hand with such fervour and so great a duration of devotion that had Finola witnessed it, she might easily have been pardoned for feeling a certain qualm of uneasiness, despite the

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inflection which he laid upon his address of her as "sweet sister."

But his speech was long enough to allow of Kathleen's fully recovering her breath.

"Dear brother Harry," she said, "it rejoices me to hear that you have learned the greatest truth that man—ay, or woman either—can learn, though I think that a woman acquires the knowledge first, for indeed it is all her life. Trust me, Harry, the flame of true love is a sacred fire; 'tis not made up of a number of lighted twigs which may be planted right and left. I fear, dear brother Harry, that in the past you have been somewhat prodigal of your sparks; that is the sure way of extinguishing a fire, Harry."

"Ay, madam, next to throwing cold water on it," said Harry with a little smirk. "The torch which I thought divine a year ago received a pretty liberal douche at your hands. But that was, I allow, but part of my discipline."

I thought that my turn to speak had come. The handsome pair were showing some inclination to maintain the duetto, paying no regard to the possibilities of a trio, and I felt that for certain I should have a voice in whatever music was in the air.

So I ventured to step forward, saying—

"Believe me, brother, the torch of true love must be subject to the ordeal by water after the manner that applies with such excellent effect to the discovery of a witch. If the douche of cold water which is thrown upon it quench it, then 'tis not true love, but if its flame survive; one knows that 'tis true love and not the *ignis fatuus*—the witch-fire of the mere."

They both turned and looked at me as if they were utterly amazed that I should have the bold-

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ness to hold any opinion of my own on a subject which they had studied in all its phases. But the one that bore the prophet Balaam knew a good deal more than his intimates gave him credit for, though he only expressed his views under pressure, and then at no great length, showing that he was wiser than many makers of speeches, albeit of humble origin.

"Give me thy hand, brother," said Harry with the laugh of a tolerant good nature. "Give me thy hand; thou hast spoke the truth, and I swear that if ever thou showest a desire to be light o' love, I myself will take thee in hand and lead thee back by the lug to the one who hath taught us all we know of the greatest mystery that ever poor man sought to unmesh. Mark that, brother."

"And so you will need to be circumspect, dear Walter," said Kathleen gravely.

I felt more like the one that was overridden by Balaam than ever, for on one side was the staff of the false prophet ready to belabour me, and on the other side stood the angel. But I had not the confidence of my prototype who knew that he and his master spoke the same language, so I held my peace. Methinks 'twas full time, when brother Harry had begun to preach of the penalties of inconstancy. I had thought of Balaam, and Saul also was among the prophets.

It was a great relief for me to hear at this point the sound of a great tumult without the Tower. I rushed to one of the windows and Kathleen laid a hand on each of my shoulders, standing behind and peering out with a cheek close to mine.

"'Tis my father who has returned," she cried. "He went out in the morning in pursuit of the Roundheads, and now he has returned."

I had forgot all about the Roundheads.

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CHAPTER XXXIII

LOOKING out of the window one could see about a score of the retainers of O'Brian fully, if somewhat irregularly, armed. Some bore harquebuses of a ridiculously antique pattern, but these were few; the greater number carried such irregular implements of warfare as reaping hooks bound on to the tops of poles, scythe blades equally treated, and pike heads, more or less damaged. A flail or two, and here and there a simple stake sharpened to a point, might be seen in the strong hands of the motley garrison of O'Brian's Tower.

But, however a curious spectacle they would have presented to any one accustomed to the precision of well trained troops, it would be impossible not to perceive that the flush of victory was on the faces of all. They were all full of elation, cheering and chattering and laughing—recalling certain incidents of the fight the one to the other—some that were serious, others that were infinitely droll.

"They have overtaken the fugitives and routed them utterly," I cried, catching the infection of their elation.

"Erin go bragh!" shouted Harry. "These simple fellows have taught Cromwell's men a lesson! Oh, why did not we follow up the advantage which we gained? Wherefore did we listen to the counsel of Father Mahony? With our modern arms what might not we have accomplished,

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when these fellows have done so well with their scythes and hooks ? "

" Ah, be not over sure," said Kathleen.

And then her father burst into the room with the shout of a hunter.

He broke off on the highest note, seeing Harry, whom he had last heard of as being a prisoner on his way to the Indies.

" Heavens above us ! " he cried. " Is it our dear boy returned safe and sound ? "

" 'Tis none other, indeed, O'Brian ; and it seemeth that I have come back at the right hour," said Harry.

" You have come in our hour of greatest triumph, my lad," cried O'Brian. " There is a spirit aroused in Ireland this day that thunder cannot quench. One of them run to earth and the other two killed after the fastest hour's run that we ever had in our glen. Oh, why were you not with us—and you, Watty, my son—where were you that you were not among us this day ? And, mind you, all that we had with us was a half-bred beagle."

I confess that at first I failed to comprehend the exact import of O'Brian's words. A half-bred beagle ? A half-bred beagle ? I could see that Harry was as greatly puzzled as I myself. He could not perceive the precise connection between a half-bred beagle and the pursuit of Cromwell's men.

We looked strangely, I have no doubt, at O'Brian.

" Heavens above us ! what's the matter, that you both keep your eyes on me ? I'm not used to such attentions."

" Do you tell us that you actually hunted down Cromwell's army with a half-bred beagle ? " cried Harry.

O'Brian's jaw fell.

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"By the powers! if I didn't go and forget all about the soldiers!" he said in a whisper. "I give you my word, lads, the soldiers went as clean out of my mind as they did out of the glen, where we last saw them. It was all due to that rapparee of a fox—the first, I mean. You see, I had ordered every man in the Tower to be under arms after dawn, to start in pursuit of the soldiers; for one of our boys had brought word to us that they were crossing the hills as hard as they could travel, and I was in hopes that we might cut off a few of them now and again; but before we had gone more than a mile down the gap, that dog fox crossed the boreen, and in another minute every man Jack of us had started to hunt it down. It led us a pretty dance. I'm telling you, and only that half-bred beagle Gillimohr—you'll mind its father, Harry—Gillireagh his name was—a good dog; but that's neither here nor there."

"Gillireagh—first-rate with a low scent," said Harry.

"I dare swear you're right: you always did know a dog, Harry," acquiesced O'Brian. "Well, sir, as I was saying, off we went, thinking that maybe a mile or two would tire us all out; but that brute of a fox led us on and on, till we found ourselves within easy distance of Finnbar's Spring, where we lost him. But while we were guessing round as men will, which earth he had taken to, by the powers, if a vixen didn't run out of cover, and off we went in true Clare style. Talk of running! From the Gap to Lisnabreeny well under the hour, and then on to Rathbeg without drawing rein. We killed at the Grohgorm side of the glen; and—would you believe it?—out crawled a fox—the third—and he carried us on to Ardreagh, which, as you know, is eight good miles further; but as

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our one hound had slaughtered himself with trying to do the work of a whole pack within the first two or three miles from Ardreagh, we couldn't expect to keep the fox from an earth, good luck to him! . . . And so here we are. Oh, you should have been with us, Harry. You were the boy that enjoyed a run."

"Yes," said Harry; "I saw the day when I thought that a run after a fox was the finest sport in the world, but now I have come to see that the chase of the wolf—that old wolf, Cromwell—is worth all the fox-hunts in the world."

But the rebuke which this remark implied fell easily away from O'Brian. He swore that he had set out to follow the remnant of the troop that had besieged the Castle—heaven knew that his intentions had been good, but it had plainly not been the will of heaven that he should follow them, or why had that brute of a fox been sent out of cover just at the wrong moment?

For my part, although I felt how characteristic of the place and the people was the whole incident of this gallant gentleman's setting out with his untrained band in pursuit of an equal number of the finest troops in the world, and then turning aside to follow a fox, I could not but be thankful to that particular fox for having interposed to save O'Brian and his merry men from annihilation. But really they had never been within reach of danger. They never had the least chance of getting in touch with the fugitive troop of Cromwell's horse. And now that we had rid ourselves for ever (as we hoped) of the oppressor, I could only laugh at O'Brian's adventure. I was, as you can easily be persuaded to believe, in a condition of some exhilaration, not wholly due to my reflection that we had beat off our enemies, but rather to my

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dwelling on the thought that I had brought close to me a friend who was always to remain dearer to me than all the world beside.

But then there came the thought that I had yet to face a speech or two from O'Brian. One might escape, with the exercise of some strategy, from an onslaught of Cromwell's heavy riders, but there was no avoiding the cannonade of O'Brian's eloquence.

Down it came upon me, so soon as Kathleen and I stood before him—he had just refreshed himself by copious draughts of the native distillation known, as I have mentioned before, as uisque—with the story of our love—down it came upon us—shot and ball, singing through the air and crashing home upon us until we reeled beneath that impact of artillery eloquence. His daughter—that was his text at the first, and he kept harping on his daughter for nigh half an hour. Were there any relations so sweet as those of a father and daughter? he asked us passionately, the tears streaming down his cheeks. He described the daughter as an infant in her mother's arms, the daughter as a child playing with her dolls, the daughter as a girl stitching at her tapestry. We had the daughter as a sunbeam lighting up the dim household, the daughter as a fountain of limpid water springing from the mountain side and making all the land to smile, the daughter as a rosebud turning even the most arid mountain side into a delight, the daughter as a dewdrop glittering through the early dawn of life, the daughter as a pearl, lustrous and precious beyond all gems yielded up by the old ocean as a tribute to the shore . . . Here I lost count of the various aspects of the daughter, the truth being that I only wanted O'Brian's daughter to be my wife, well knowing that she would be all in all to me.

Then he gave us his blessing, and we had up to the

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great hall that night all the retainers of the Tower, and they drank our healths with great readiness, and some of them were even obliging enough to offer to repeat this act of courtesy. You see, they were flushed with victory: being men of imagination, they had no difficulty in confusing their victory over the fox with a victory over Cromwell's troop of horse; and after drinking a few more healths of their friends, they began to drink to the health of Cromwell himself. When remonstrated with, one of the most ardent of the household explained to me, with a volubility that O'Brian himself need not have been ashamed of, that but for the existence of Cromwell and his boldness in sending his horsemen against us, we should never have known the great joy of the victory which we were now engaged in celebrating. This was the truest Irish logic, and it appealed with great force to those who had not yet drunk to our enemy. They were willing to drink it twice over. But this we knew to be due to the impulsiveness of the zeal of the newly converted: the Irish logic of their comrade had proved too much for them: it carried them off their feet, and left not a few of them in a moderately helpless condition by nightfall.

And all the way back to Castle Omeragh brother Harry, riding by my side, lectured me on the beauteous aspects of fidelity in love, and I listened without so much as uttering a word. I was so happy this day that I easily allowed him to play the part of the exponent of true love. Nor did I ever hint to him that I submitted through the fact of my having heard so oft that the best exponent of the virtue of honesty is he that hath once been a thief.

But when Master Harry began to address himself to me as though I stood in need of reproof on this especial matter, I began to laugh, and that

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laugh of mine caused him to look solemn, in a way that seemed to me to be drollery itself.

He shook his head, saying—

"I sorrow greatly to be a witness of your levity, brother. Believe me to speak the truth, dear Walter, when I tell you that he that entereth into such sacred obligations as those which you have to-day formally undertaken, in any spirit of levity, doth a great wrong to the sentiment of that love which truly is the greatest truth that heaven has entrusted to the keeping of us poor mortals."

"True, sir," said I. "Already I feel that seriousness is in the air, just as one oft hath a feeling that a thunderstorm is approaching. You are, I freely allow, the best mentor I could have on this especial theme; for never have I seen any man enter with such gravity into so great a multiplicity of *affaires de cœur*. You speak with all the weight of experience, dear brother, and therefore I esteem beyond all measure your judgment on the matters which you have touched upon. But one thing I have long desired to ask of you, dear Harry, and that is, Who was the young demoiselle that followed you to Ireland a brief space after I had taken my departure for the Bay Colonies?"

Harry flushed, and his pony became somewhat difficult to manage at this point.

"Peste!" he exclaimed. "She was none other than Julie de Valloc. I give you my word, Walter, that upon no occasion did I ever say to her a word that a brother might not have sanctioned. In truth, Walter, I have been one of the most unfortunate of men in regard to the other sex. But 'tis all over now: my good fortune came at last, and I acknowledge that it came through your dear Kathleen, for when I went to her a year ago, high in my own conceit, I got my first rebuff, and with

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it such words as I have never forgot. Indeed, brother, thou hast got the greatest treasure that man can have."

"Of that I have become aware," said I. "And if the knowledge come to me somewhat tardily——"

"You have no one to blame but yourself, Watty," he cried. "How it was that you failed to see that she had at least a certain *tendresse* for you, passeth my knowledge."

"Alas, brother, 'twas my lack of experience in that especial *culte*," said I. "But what passeth my knowledge is how you were led to believe that your suit would be acceptable to her. Your error in this respect was not, I venture to think, due to any lack of experience on your part, dear brother."

He laughed shrewdly, and after a pause turned to me saying, in a very serious tone—

"Before we dismiss this subject for ever, Walter, I would say to you that I am sure your own good sound sense will persuade you that no good thing would come of harping upon—upon—well, upon any knowledge that you may have of—of—well, of my past experiences, especially in the presence of Finola. You see, Walter, women are curious creatures, not easy to understand, so that——"

"But I know no more than a simple half-dozen of these—these—experiences of yours, Harry," said I, "and I have really well-nigh forgot their names; now, what is half a dozen? Were you not a whole year in France? I am sure that if your constancy came to be weighed in the balance, the beam would not be turned against you by the preponderance of those simple six whose names I so imperfectly recollect."

"Mayhap you are right," said he, musingly, "But however that may be, I shall trust to your good fellowship not to torment poor Finola by any

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references to—to—well, to such insignificant matters as that vanity of mine in wearing a likeness painted on ivory in a locket suspended by a riband round my neck. You understand, old Watty ? "

"Dear brother," I made reply, "I have proved to you during the past year that in matters wherein a woman is concerned I am little short of a fool ; but, dear brother, I am not a great enough fool to fancy that the peace of a household runs any chance of being cemented by a more or less pertinent recalling of an act of devotion offered to another shrine than that to which one hath given one's whole heart. And now, let me offer you all my thanks for the haste you made to tell Kathleen and her father of the dispersal of Cromwell's men."

"It was only at midnight" said he, "that Father Mahony's spy arrived with the tidings that Cromwell was so hard pressed at Clonmel that he sent his messenger to recall the troop who were harrying our glen. He must have been sorely in need of men when he accounted the addition of a score worth taking so much trouble to gain. Our spy told us that in every sortie from the town General O'Neill was successful ; and, better still, Cromwell's cannons had scarce been able to make the smallest impression upon the walls."

"Our father was right when he said that the fellows had left us for ever," said I.

"And Finola was right when she affirmed that her father would give the usurper his first check," cried Harry. "Finola hath ever been in the right in her judgment."

And I, little as I knew of women, had still sufficient knowledge to enable me to feel confident that the assumption that the woman is ever in the right promises well for the future happiness of a young couple starting life hand in hand. The only

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pity is that now and again this basis of simple truth is shattered by the overwhelming weight of the man's conceit.

Therefore when Harry had declared that Finola was ever in the right, I held my peace, desiring that to be the last word between us at this time.

So we reached the Castle in silence.

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CHAPTER XXXIV

IT scarce need be said that we found all within the Castle highly elated by the news that had reached them through Father Mahony's spy outside the town of Clonmel; and it seemed as if the victories of General O'Neill were due to the assistance given to him by our retainers—so at least one might be led to judge from giving some attention to the manner of their speech. But indeed it would have been wrong to blame them for confusing in their own minds the recollection of the tussle which they themselves had had, with the news of the victories of General O'Neill.

But when Harry appeared with a glum look on his face and some flying French oaths on his lips, after seeking to pay his devoirs to his charming lady, my thoughts quickly ran into a new channel.

He wished to know why in the name of all the plagues of Egypt and elsewhere Father Mahony had chosen this day to ride off with Finola to O'Brian's Tower, and why in the name of all the ancient gods of Greece and Rome had the priest taken such a route to the Tower as had caused him and Finola to be concealed from our view when we were riding through the glen—that was what he wanted me to tell him; and when I dared to say that it might be that Father Mahony had taken the less direct track by reason of his having a fear that the knowledge which had come to him of the final retreat of our

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enemies was not wholly accurate, Harry became still more impatient.

"Peste!" he exclaimed. "Why could not he have waited at least for our return? He had no reason to doubt that you would return with ample knowledge of the dispersal of the troop, and where was his need for haste?"

Then he went stamping about for some time, and when he came to rest at last beside me his face wore quite a grave expression.

"I tell you, Walter," he said in a low voice, "I have of late observed a change in the manner of Father Mahony in respect of myself. I have seen in his face an ill-disguised look of suspicion, when I was by the side of Finola."

"That is folly, brother," said I, though what I had a mind to say to this observing brother of mine was comprised in that line of Shakespeare—

"The thief doth think each bush an officer."

"'Tis no folly," cried Harry. "I swear to you that more than once during your absence I have found him in lurking when he knew that Finola and I were together. He hath become so accustomed to playing the part of a spy that it comes as second nature to him. I like it not, and I will not have it were he fifty times Father Mahony."

"It seemeth to me that all the suspicion is on your side rather than on his," said I warmly. "I hope that none within thls Castle of ours will ever forget how much we owe to Father Mahony. What do we not owe to him?"

"If I failed to measure truly our debt to him I should have betrayed myself long ago," said he. "I have never fallen short in any esteem of his services. But I tell you that——"

"I will hear nothing that you would tell me of our best friend," I cried warmly. "But I tell you,

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brother, that if the true love which you bear to Finola leadeth you to——"

"Peste! preach not to me!" he shouted, stamping on the floor, and then turning on his heel and stalking out of the room leaving me alone and amazed.

And all this simply because on his return to the Castle after an absence of a single day he had failed to find his lady awaiting him!

It was my turn to feel impatient. I thought that I had good reason for so feeling. But a moment later my only impression was one of sadness. The thought that within so brief a space of time one of our household should become so utterly blind to all that duty and gratitude imposed upon him, was indeed saddening.

But knowing Father Mahony as I did, I could not but perceive that he was right in assuming as he had done, that a day or two in the companionship of Kathleen would be a great good to Finola. There was no girl of her own age and rank within the Castle, and who (except a lover) could doubt that she was pining for the companionship of one of her own sex?

It would be as impossible to doubt this as it would be to question the advantage of a close association with such a nature as Kathleen's.

I feared that Harry might take horse forthwith and hasten back to O'Brian's Tower. But when I began to consider the matter, I came to the conclusion that he could not for very shame do so: there are limits to the ardour of even the most devoted lover, and it was because he knew this that Harry had waxed impatient on finding Finola gone away.

Harry was sulky for an hour only; when we met at supper he was as full as ever of that liveliness which had made him so great a favourite at the French court. He was very delicate in his raillery of

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me in the presence of our father; and I am bound to say that he might easily have made me seem more ridiculous than he did in his mimicry of my outburst against him when he had entered the hall at the Tower and found Kathleen in my arms.

We took tobacco together in front of the fire before bedtime, and went arm in arm to our rooms in the turret. We were both by this time very well satisfied with the world in which we were living. Only one night must pass before each of us should see the one that he loved. I knew that Harry's ardour would drive him forth to O'Brian's Tower, and I myself had a message to bear O'Brian from my father.

It was only when I lighted my candle that I came upon a scrap of paper folded up and sealed, with my name upon it in the handwriting of Father Mahony. It was lying on my candlestick, otherwise I should have come upon it during the day.

When I had broken the seals I found written on the paper these words—

"*Look at the chrystall Pyramid at mid of the night.*"

This handwriting was also of Father Mahony.

But what was meant by this strange admonition?

I could not guess what it meant, but having a full recollection of all that happened when I had last examined the curious thing, I made up my mind to be obedient. I took down the Moorish crystal from its bracket and placed it in readiness on the table, and then chose a volume from my scanty stock which I trusted would keep me awake till midnight. I did not over-rate the book—who hath ever over-rated the beauty of the piteous tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*?—for at the stroke of midnight I was as deep enthralled as I had ever been by the poetry through which the passion of a maid sobs and sighs and shudders once and for all time. So great an effect

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had that reading upon me, there was a sob in my throat when I laid the tome aside, and my hands were tremulous white placing the pyramid with the index to the North Star.

For many minutes I peered into the clearness of that curious symbol, but it seemed as if I was to be fooled by it this time; when, just as I was on the point of throwing the thing aside in impatience, the faint misty surface of the mirror—it seemed like a mirror—became touched with light, and once again there was a movement as of life within the depths of the crystal. The mist began to roll away very gently, disclosing the green sea that I had last seen therein and the same boat sailed out of the distance of silvery vapours, growing larger and still larger until it filled up the whole of the picture space, so to speak. And now I saw that the boat was indeed none other than the one which I had seen within the crystal a fortnight ago—the ship's boat in which Harry had been borne back to us.

There it was once more sailing under my eyes; and when the sail shifted, I saw that Finola was sitting on one of the thwarts, and that Father Mahony was at the tiller. On it came until it seemed that I was face to face with the priest—that he was not farther off from me than the breadth of the boat. The cold smile that was so frequently on his face was there now, and I heard his voice saying—

"Son Walter, you have done well."

"And you also, Father," said I. "I doubt not that you have done well in leaving us at this time: you are the one that understandeth, I am not."

"But your feet are on the threshold of all understanding," said he. "Yesterday you took your first step."

"Yesterday I told a woman for the first time that I loved her," said I.

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"And now it is left for you to see what a woman who loves a man is ready to do for him."

I laughed.

"I have no need of such knowledge, sir," said I. "I think that the man who loves a woman loves in her all womankind, and understands all womankind."

The smile of the priest became slenderer than ever.

"To love a woman is not to understand her, son," said he. "But how far think you a woman will go who loves truly ?"

"She will die for him if called upon," said I stoutly.

"Only that ? Think you that that is the uttermost limit to which a woman's devotion will carry her ?"

"Is there a step beyond death, father ?"

"There is duty, my son. A woman will not only die for a man whom she loves ; she will even go so far as to forsake him if duty makes such a demand upon her. Son, you are on the threshold of all understanding. Farewell."

The silvery mist spread once more over the surface of the sea at which I was gazing in the depths of the crystal, and the boat with its occupants was obscured. I found myself standing in the middle of my room overcome with wondering how vivid an impression a dream may have upon one who giveth himself up to dreaming.

But how could I think that all my experience of that mystery of the Moors was no more than a dream ? Had my first meeting with my brother on that night when he had told me of the existence of the mine beneath the causeway, been a dream ? Had my second meeting with him in the boat on the Atlantic been a dream ?

I could not believe that I had been fooled upon

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the third occasion of my consulting the crystal. I had been, by means of a power, the scope of which 'twere in vain for me to hope to define, brought face to face with Father Mahony, and from him I had learned—what ?

I began to ask myself what it was that I had learned, and the conclusion that I came to after a thoughtful quarter of an hour, was that the most important fact on which I had gained some knowledge, was that Father Mahony and Finola had gone away together so that I might learn that in the estimation of some women, the sentiment of duty is higher than the sentiment of love.

I could not deny that I looked forward with some measure of interest to whatsoever might be the outcoming of this matter ; but what I could scarce comprehend was how it came that I had seen the priest and the girl aboard of the boat and at sea. Were they not at that moment safe within O'Brian's Tower ? How then was it that I had seen them otherwise ?

The result of my considering of this question was to lead me to think that it might be possible that the visions of the crystal had, as it were, the same background of sea and sky. But I made up my mind that, whether or not Harry went to O'Brian's Tower in the morning, I would be careful that nothing should prevent my going thither.

I found when the morning came that I had no need to be very resolute on this point. My difficulty was to get myself ready in time to be in company with Harry upon this journey, for my dear brother was up betimes, and with only a pretence of breaking our fast, we rode forth.

With what amazement we learned, on reaching the Tower, that neither Father Mahony nor Finola had yet arrived ?

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At first it was our impression that O'Brian and Kathleen were in league with Finola to carry out some prank upon the two ardent lovers who had come so early to prove how desperate was their case at being severed for even the space of a night from their dear ladies; but I soon perceived that the matter was over serious for such a jest. They whom we sought were certainly not under the roof of O'Brian's stronghold, and we had come on a wildgoose chase.

But what then had happened? Father Mahony had surely ridden forth with Finola from Castle Omeragh with the intention of coming hither. What had become of them on the way?

It would be impossible to say that the wild imprecations of my brother, or the equally fluent, if less impassioned, phrases of O'Brian went far toward the solving of the question.

I left Harry swearing stoutly in French and English that if so much as a hair of the head of Finola were harmed he would make Cromwell rue the day he had ever taken shipping for Ireland. For my part I had never heard of any serious campaign being undertaken to the detriment of a girl's tresses, though I thought I might, by racking my brains, recall instances of an over-luxuriant head of hair, with may be a grey eye or so beneath languishing lashes, being instrumental (under Providence) of a vast deal of bloodshed; so I hastened from my brother, who was surrounding himself with a nimbus of profanity—the Fiend's imitation of the halo of a saint—to the side of my dear lady.

"Kathleen," I said, "I want the judgment of a woman upon a woman. Finola loveth my brother, and she would stay by his side if it were not that some stronger power than true love hath turned her feet from him. Tell me, dear one, what it is

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that such as she or you regard as more precious than true love."

"There is naught that we love more truly than true love," she replied.

"What!" I cried. "Naught—naught? Then indeed we are undone."

She was silent for a space; but her eyes were eloquent. She put forth her hand to mine.

"Dear love," she said, "do you mind the lines of our poet—

> "I could not love thee, dear, so much,
> Loved I not Honour more?"

"I know the lines," I replied, "but their import—What import have they in your mind—in your heart at this moment? Honour—Kathleen, can you believe for a moment that my brother, light-hearted though he be, could be base enough——"

She turned away from me with a little cry.

"No—no—no—a thousand times no!" she cried. She had one moment of silent thought, the next she had sprung upon me, grasping an arm of mine in each of her hands.

"Walter, Walter," she cried, "Finola hath gone to her father."

I opened my mouth to speak, but I had no words. There was a long pause before I clasped her to my heart, saying—

"I knew that I was right in consulting a noble woman in regard to the act of another noble woman. What fools are we men! Why should not we have known without parley that Finola had gone to stand by the side of her father in the day of his peril?"

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CHAPTER XXXV

WE did not expect that O'Brian would understand the impulse on which Finola had acted; for I have noted that your master of all rhetoric—he who can draw floods of tears from the eyes of such as hear him by his impassioned history of an act of heroism on the part of a girl, is the last man in the world to credit the doing of such an act.

But Harry understood (in some measure), after Kathleen had spoken with him apart from every one of us, how Finola should come to have a longing to be by the side of her father at Clonmel. At first it seemed impossible for him to believe that she should have any aspiration except to be near the man who loved her—such is the realm of self-esteem in which the natural man liveth, especially if he be a lover. But gradually Kathleen opened his eyes (she had done so once before) so that he learned something of the true nature of a true woman.

And as a matter of course he sought to follow her, not to carry her back to Castle Omeragh, but to stand by her side in the perils to which she went so lightly.

And when I told Kathleen that it was laid on me to go with my brother upon this emprize, she laid her head upon my shoulder and wept, not bitterly, I knew, but in all tenderness.

"I knew it—I knew it, dear Walter," she said. "I knew that you would go thither, and what voice

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soever that may be raised to ask you to refrain will not be mine. I may never see you again, my love, but if I did not know that you had gone to strike a blow for the King I would never see you again."

That was, I knew, the true spirit in which a lady should send forth her knight to the wars; and it is because war calls for such acts of self-sacrifice that it ceases to be a crime and becomes a virtue. Despite the admiration which I still have for the precepts of George Fox, this is my firm belief. War is a horror, but it had its origin in Heaven and it retains some of those elements which pertain to the place of its birth.

But albeit that Harry had come to acknowledge that Finola was the noblest of women, he was inconsistent as any man in the bitterness which he showed against Father Mahony. Her forsaking the Castle was the work of Father Mahony, he declared; failing quite to perceive how it was that he was doing his best to deprive Finola of all the credit of her self-sacrifice. Yes, it was all Father Mahony's doing, he averred, and if any harm came to Finola he would make the priest account for it. He had noticed, he said again, that Father Mahony had looked on him with eyes of suspicion; and then he called himself a fool for failing to suspect the suspicions of Father Mahony. So he railed all the time that we were making our preparations to follow the priest and Finola, and I think that I showed some little wisdom in that I made no attempt to stay the torrent of his anger and chagrin. I had myself too recently walked as one who is blind to be ready now to cast a stone at one whose eyesight was never the clearest.

And indeed when I thought of the innumerable perils of the journey which Finola had undertaken, I could not but share some of my brother's irritation

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against Father Mahony who might, I thought, have at least given us a chance of making such preparations for her journey as would have rendered it in some measure secure. For, as it was, how could one hope that she should ever be able to pass through the lines of Cromwell's soldiery, and enter the town of Clonmel, which her father was so splendidly defending?

But this was assuming that she would be successful in traversing the many leagues that lay between our region of the county of Clare and the town of Clonmel in Tipperary—an undertaking of enormous peril in itself, considering the condition of our unhappy country at that time. Even under the shrewd guidance of Father Mahony, Finola would be daily and hourly in danger, and at the thought of this I confess that I felt some anger toward our friend and benefactor.

What, however, were we to think, when, on our way back to Castle Omeragh, we came suddenly upon two of our ponies grazing upon a green patch of the glen? They were, we saw, the ponies on which Father Mahony and Finola had ridden forth three days before. We had but five ponies in our stables and thus did not need to be told which of them were taken by the priest and his companion.

Harry gave a cheer.

"We have done them an injustice, after all," he cried. "They have not gone farther than our own glen."

And truly it seemed as if, seeing that the ponies were nigh, the riders could not be far off. I fear that the consciousness that this was so, was a pleasure to me; but there are moments, everyone knoweth, when one feels glad to be relieved of the need to be adventurous.

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"They are nigh, beyond doubt," I cried, putting my pony to the gallop.

But when we got beside the grazing ponies we were amazed to find that their bridles were gone and that the saddles were sodden with rain, albeit that rain had not fallen—a strange thing for our watery region—for a whole day.

It was plain that the ponies had not been ridden for at least that space of time.

This was the conclusion to which I came; and before I had time to express it to my brother, he was galloping wildly up the slope to a point that commanded a view of the greater part of the glen.

I looked round to see if it were possible to gain any knowledge of this matter—if it were possible to find out how it was that the ponies had come hither; but all that I could perceive was that they had been bereft of their bridles and sent to roam through the glen at their own will.

And then, rubbing one of them down with a hand, as a man will who is fond of a horse, I espied upon one of his hocks a caked splash of red clay. This amazed me, for the only red clay in our region is to be found on the dip of Knocbride, on the track to the fishers' huts at Lamdearg.

What, then, was I to gather from this observing? Why in the name of all that is perplexing should the ponies have been in the direction of Knocbride?

Before I had succeeded in answering this question which I put to myself, Harry had returned to my side.

"They are nowhere in view," he said. "They must surely have reached the Castle and be safe lodged within its walls. It may be that they did actually set out for O'Brian's Tower, and, meeting with an adventure, returned in all haste hither."

I said nought, but remounted my pony and

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galloped by the side of my brother to our home—we were but two miles from it when we had espied the loose ponies, and it had not taken us many minutes to reach the courtyard.

Harry clamoured—

"Hath Father Mahony returned? Is Mistress O'Neill within the Castle?"

It was Dillon the gunner who replied. Father Mahony and Mistress O'Neill had not returned.

With white face Harry sprung from his saddle, and then stood staring at me.

"Well," he cried impatiently, "what have you to say to this thing? Where are they now? Where are they now? Tell me that, if the question be not too hard for you."

"It is too hard for me," I replied. "All that I can say for certain is that the ponies have been on the slope of Knocbride——"

The recollection that came to me at that moment took away my speech, for it flashed across my memory that in the depths of the crystal I had seen the priest and Finola in the boat and sailing on a green sea.

"Well—well—why do you pause?" cried Harry stamping his foot as was his wont when anything that happened was not quite to his liking. "Are you deaf or dumb or both? Peste! What is it that you seem to see that causes your jaw to drop?"

"Brother," I cried, "they have been wiser than we: they have taken shipping for Limerick and thence they mean to make their way to Clonmel."

He stared at me harder than before, and longer—there was a long pause, before he said, in a gasp:

"How know you that? Ciel! Shipping! Where could they find a ship? There are only coracles at Lamdearg."

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"There was the stout ship's galley in which you escaped from your snow," said I, "and take my word for it, they put out to sea in that same boat. They will be in Limerick, if the wind favour them, before set of sun."

Harry went slowly into one of the stone benches of the courtyard, and his face was turned to the ground for some time. At last he sprang to his feet and thence to his pony.

"Your notion is wild enough to be the truth," said he, "and that is why I am going to Lamdearg: there is no one in the village that will refuse to tell me all that may be told in respect of them whom we seek."

He went at a hard gallop out of the Castle yard, but knowing well that my pony had a long journey ahead of him, I refrained from following him. I bade Dillon see that the good little animal got a drench and a feed and then hastened within to arm myself and tell my father what was our intention. I did not doubt that Harry would return from the fishers' village with tidings of Father Mahony and Finola, and I was equally certain what the nature of the tidings would be. I had complete confidence in the truth of the visions seen within the crystal, for had not I ample proof of it? Albeit I could not tell whence its power was derived, yet I had testimony that its power existed, just as the marvellous endowment of the mariner's needle of ever pointing to the north remains, though no mortal man can say to what it is due.

I knew for certain that the priest and the daughter of General O'Neill had put off from our coast in the ship's boat, and I hoped that they would be within the walls of Clonmel before Harry and I should have passed through the gate. I trusted that it would still be allowed to us to enter by the port and not

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by means of a breach made by the cannons of Cromwell.

By the time that Harry returned I had given our trusty man Dillon his orders to pack a horse with what wearing gear we should need and some little stock of provisions and ammunition, leaving it to his own discretion to make the load as light as he could; and not many hours had gone by before my brother clattered into the Castle yard.

"It is as you averred," he cried, "The priest hath carried her off in the boat, and he shall answer to me for that act."

"We shall be on our way to the fighting by the morrow's dawn," said I. "My judgment will be much in fault if we do not find them at Clonmel."

"He carried her off—he carried her off!" muttered Harry.

"Nay, we shall find that it was she who carried him off," said I.

He turned upon me in one of his furies, declaring that Finola would never have gone from him if it had not been for Father Mahony, but I, mindful of all that I had learned of Kathleen, could not but feel an assurance that Finola had stood in no need of the prompting of any monitor save only her own woman's sense of duty, to leave the side of her lover for the side of her father.

I suppose that a book might be written having for its theme the adventures through whose midst we passed on that journey of ours to Clonmel. We would have gone by water as far as was possible, for we did not doubt that that would be the less venturesome way, but where were we to find a boat to carry us, since the snow's galley was no longer available for us? and the land journey was both difficult and dangerous. Doubtless if we had had one of

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Father Mahony's spies with us we should have had reason to ride with confidence; but all that he had learned of the tracks that were safe he had kept to himself, so that we were forced to find out for ourselves how it were best to go.

It was a fact that many districts between Clare and Tipperary had become Cromwellian, the English settlers, unlike the family of Fawcett, had in no inconsiderable measure embraced the cause of the Parliament against the King, and had sent their retainers to take the field against the Loyalists (some called them the rebels) at Clonmel. These men, who were to be found on all the tracks, were our chief danger, so that, after a skirmish or two, we were forced to travel only by night. But in resting under shelter by day we had great difficulty to discriminate between friend and foe. Once we were cruelly betrayed by a man who had loudly protested his friendliness—so loud was he that we should have suspected him. However we contrived to foil him and the last we saw of him was when he was labouring to extract a pistol bullet from his groin; we did not wait to see if his exertions were successful, though my experience hath led me to believe that such an operation should not be undertaken except by the guidance of a chirurgeon.

To be brief, on the fifth day of our journey we began to discern signs of our approach to a besieged place. People who read only such accounts as history recognizes of sieges and the like, know only of the heroic sorties of the garrison and the boldness of the attacks of the besiegers; but indeed the acts of fighting are of the smallest importance compared with such operations as the victualling of the armies. It seems to me that the main efforts of the besiegers are directed to foraging in search of food; they only do a little fighting now and again when they

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have time to spare from this more important business.

Burnt-out farm houses, farm wains broken down and derelict in the boreens through being overladen, flocks of carrion crows feeding on the bodies of men who had resisted the raiders whether they came in the guise of friends or of enemies—women and children starving beneath a miserable shelter that was no shelter under one of the hedges—these and a hundred other sights of horror gave evidence of our approach to the centre point of the siege.

Then we came within earshot of the cannons, and our hearts were cheered. Dillon, who rode with us, was able to discern between the sound of the cannon and the sound of the culverin. I could see how he was rejoicing at the prospect of having once more a heavy cannon to work, without being made aware of someone at his side to hint a scarcity of powder.

And then we went to where the reports were buzzing of the wasting of Cromwell's army by that horrible fever to whose visits no camp is a stranger. But no notion had we that this visitation had brought with it so great terrors. For every man struck down by a shot from the ramparts of the town, ten had fallen beneath the poisoned dart of disease. We learned all this and much more from one of the peasants who had been serving the besieging army bringing some supply of swine—of which some may still be found by diligent search in Ireland—and goats and fowl. He told us that General O'Neill had never made a sortie without success. He gave his enemies no peace by day or night. If a part of the camp were left unguarded at any hour, down would sweep upon it a force from the garrison, and blot out of existence a score of men, or ever a reinforcement could come

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up. If a wain laden with flour were seen toiling along the rough track for the victualling of the camp, unless it were convoyed by half the army, it would certainly fall into an ambuscade contrived by O'Neill with a skill that was easily attributed by the Roundheads to his alliance with the Foul Fiend himself. In short O'Neill was not merely holding his own, he had assumed the offensive at all times with success, proving himself to be worthy of the reputation which he had won throughout his own province of Ulster.

The marvel was that Cromwell had not ordered the siege to be raised long ago. His men were dying as do the grey plover of our coast in a snow storm, and evermore the remnant of that enfeebled army were beaten back when they ventured on an assault of the battlements. But evermore when beaten back the mighty spirit of their great captain took possession of every man in every troop, and every man went back to his quarters and sang his psalms all through the night unheeding the pitiless rain that beat through the miserable roof of the tents that composed the camp of the Roundheads, and at times his voice waxed louder and wilder and then his comrades knew that the hot clutch of the dread fever was upon him, and they shrunk from him; and at times his voice quavered and became feeble and dwindled away into nothingness. Then his comrades knew that he was dead and dragged him forth from the tent to bury him at dawn.

Anyone who affirms that Oliver Cromwell was not a great captain of men speaks foolishly. He was the greatest captain that ever led men, for he possessed not merely the courage of the wolf-hound; he possessed the remorselessness of the wolf as well; and it is the qualities of the wolf

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combined with those of the wolf-hound, that go to the making of a great captain. One half of the men whom he leads he turns into wolves, the other into wolf-hounds.

We heard the noise of the psalms rising from among the huge camp-fires when we drew nigh to the Roundhead lines one night, and my brother and our man Dillon, who had heard those strains many a time before, felt no more inclined to mock them than I did, who now heard them for the first time; and I can truly say that I never felt more grave in all my life.

And in the early dawn which rose grey and watery over Knocmeil, on the other side of the river, I saw one of the burials that took place at every dawn. The trench that had been dug to receive the bodies was capacious—it had need to be so. Poor fellows! Poor fellows! Though they had been our enemies they were so no longer: the dead are no man's enemies; therefore we held ourselves to be no traitors to our country—whatever Father Mahony might say—when we knelt down in our hiding places and took off our hats, whispering, below our breath:

"Poor fellows! poor fellows!"

We should have been traitors to our manhood had we done any less.

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CHAPTER XXXVI

OUR plans for getting within the town were of the simplest that could be devised. We had taken counsel among ourselves daily on our journey, and as a matter of course we had formed many and diverse schemes for the carrying out of our purpose. But at the last we resolved that our best chance of success lay in the simple design of awaiting in our place of hiding a sortie from the town and then suddenly joining in the attack, and afterward retiring through the gates at the command of the General. We trusted that the strategy of Father Mahony had brought him and Finola through the lines of the besiegers in safety, and so within the town ; but even if we should fail to find them already there, we could at least rejoice the heart of O'Neill by telling him that his daughter had escaped from the prison ship.

Well, pursuing this simple plan, we had left our ponies at a cabin among the hills about ten miles from Clonmel, and had marched with great caution and circumspection all through the night until, at the dawn of day, we found ourselves in a position to watch the burying of the dead of Cromwell's camp. When the ghastly day had fully arisen the booming of the cannons of the tower which Cromwell had caused to be built opposite the south gate began, and it was replied to from the gate tower on the ramparts.

But judge with what surprise and dismay we

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perceived that a wide breach had already been made in the wall, and that with every shot a portion of the masonry came tumbling down! It was but too evident that the cannons on the camp tower had been concentrating their fire upon this place for some days, and that it was their intention to continue doing so until the breach should be wide enough to admit of an assault being made with every chance of success.

And yet all the accounts which we had yet got of the siege had agreed in giving to General O'Neill the honour of a victorious resistance! None of the camp followers who had brought tidings to the town had touched upon the matter of this breach in the walls in the course of their stories.

Our hearts fell with every boom that came from the cannons on the camp tower—with every cloud of that dense smoke—we could well-nigh taste its sulphurous breath—which went forth with a sudden quick rush, and then was stayed and began slowly to roll away, or ever the sound of the cannon could reach our ears. It seemed strange beyond all words to see the tumbling down of the masonry of the wall beneath the impact of the shot, before the sound of that same shot had come to us.

We lay in our hiding place until noon, when the firing ceased, and the sulphurous scent in the air gave place to the smell that came from the cabin kitchens. To us the perfume seemed the most delicious that could be in the world. We looked into one another's faces quite piteously, and hung our heads. The tears came to our eyes. We could stand that seductive smell no longer. We thought that the dinner hour of the camp would be the best for our withdrawing without observation. The troopers were moving about with soup kettles and buckets of stew, and at intervals over the prospect

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were dotted the figures of the wretched peasants who had been forced to carry supplies to those who should have been their enemies.

We noted at a short distance from us a miserably clad old man leading an ass with osier creels shaking on each of its thin sides. Behind him tramped a barefoot colleen with hair wildly untidy and very plentiful, so that scarce an inch of her begrimed face was visible. They had been to the camp with victuals, it was plain, and were now returning to their little shielding among the hills.

We fancied that we perceived an excellent chance of escaping any possible observation while retiring from the point which we had reached for noting whatever the dawn had to reveal to us; so we scrambled out of our hiding-place, and keeping in the hollow of the undulating hill side, made haste to put the ass between the moving men of the camp and ourselves.

The moment the poor old man saw us he cried out in an agony of terror, taking us for raiders.

"Your honours' excellence!" he cried, in the accent of the Irish peasant who speaks English only with trouble. "I have a permit to raise foods for the camp, and I come from serving his honour the Excellency Lord Cromwell with six geese, twelve ducks and a sound suckling pig—my granddaughter hath the full tale—therefore I have naught to offer your honours but the humble prayers of a poor man."

"Hold thy peace," cried brother Harry. "Continue thy march. We need naught from thee, only to walk by the side of thine ass, which seemeth to me an honourable member of thy family."

"The heavens be your honour's bed, and may you never know what hunger means," said the old fellow, giving a twitch to the rope that served indifferent

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well as a bridle, and resuming his march with bowed head, while the black-haired grand-daughter trudged behind, none giving her much attention. He was beyond doubt greatly relieved to find that we were not Cromwellians.

"We are your friends, you poor old soul," said I in Irish, and at the sound of his own tongue the man's face visibly brightened.

"Glory be to heaven!" he cried in the same speech. "And it was I that took you for our enemies, who are eating us out of house and home! We have had many a bad famine in the South, but they were all good years compared with the coming of Cromwell. And whither do your honours hope to go at this time?" he added.

I looked at Harry, and he gave me a significant glance.

"We seek only to enter the town at a convenient moment," said he.

The old fellow was, we could see, suspicious by reason of that announcement. He, however, had had too many years of experience in the midst of enemies to betray himself.

"May be that, your honour," he said cautiously, and with downcast eyes. "But it's queer, seeing that most of them that's in the town would be willing to get out of it."

"We have our reasons," said Harry. "Where do you live? Can you give us house-room till we see how things are going?"

"Oh, your honours couldn't lower yourselves to come under a poor thatch," cried the old man, in evident fear of the invasion which threatened him.

"Look ye here, my good fellow," said I; "I promise you that you shall be well paid for giving us our lodging. If things go well with us we may be able to put you on the way of making a fortune."

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The old man laughed incredulously—almost derisively.

"A fortune—may be that," he said, when he had once more resumed that mask of simplicity which the Irish peasant had been compelled to wear (for his own protection) since the days of Strongbow—perhaps since the days of the Danes. "A fortune would be a great thing for me, your honour's excellence, wouldn't it?"

"But you have children—grandchildren," remarked Harry.

"Only one grandchild, but she's a flower, isn't she, your honour's excellence?" said the old man, and he stopped and cast a look of loving admiration at the very ordinary colleen who trudged behind him.

My brother made a wry face at me behind the old man's back, but he had too warm a feeling for all who bore the name of woman to laugh outright. He cast a critical glance toward the girl, saying, in the Irish tongue—

"A flower, indeed—oh, the very flower of maidenhood." Then he turned quickly to me, whispering in French; "Ciel! the girl hath a pair of well-shaped feet!"

How he could have gained that knowledge, considering that the girl's bare feet were soiled with travel, I know not; but Harry was ever something of a wonder where a wench was concerned.

"Brother," said I severely, "pray remember the matter which we have in hand. Is this a time——"

"Psha! every time is a time for admiring all that is worthy of admiration. I say that a more delicately shaped pair of feet and ankles——"

I cut short his eulogy by laying my hand on the old man's shoulder, saying—

"Lead us on to your cabin, good man, and if so

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be that we sleep beneath your thatch you shall be well paid. Lead us on, I say, and tell us as you go how many men Cromwell hath been losing daily, and how long it is since that great breach was made in the wall of the town ? "

I had spoken in Irish, so that the fellow should have no excuse for pretending that he did not understand. But once more that expression of foolish simplicity overspread his face. He gave the ass's leading-rope a twitch, setting the animal in motion while he said—

" 'Tis a power of burying that has gone on in this land, your honour's excellence. But I wouldn't take any account of them that's dead ; it's them that's alive that will have to be beaten if your honour is on the side of the Irish, and there's a power of live men still in the camp, and for their appetites—the colleen behind me keeps the tale of their appetites—geese, ducks, a little pig, to say nothing of onions and other fruits. Oh, they are all living men ; and all the talk to-day was of the assault that is to be made upon the breach in two days. But, to be sure, I'm naught but a poor man with no learning, and I'm on the way to a good ripe age."

" Brother," said Harry, " I'll swear that the girl's feet are most perfect as to shape, and her ankles—by heaven, sir, 'tis a gross shame that such feet should be allowed to go unshod. Is it not the simple duty of such as us, Walter, to see that feet like hers be—— ? "

I could not but be impatient. Here was this fellow—but where was the use of trying to change the nature of one who was born when the planet Mercury was in the ascendant ? and I dare swear that Harry came into this world when Mercury was in the best position for instilling its nature into men.

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"Brother," said I, "I am truly shamed for you. A peasant Irish girl! and you do not think it a disgrace——"

"But I tell you—'tis only the simple statement of a simple fact—I tell you that her feet—what, brother, do you indeed fancy that my heart—that my truth is less true, because I cannot shut my eyes to all that is charming—all that is bewitching; and I repeat that her ankles—great heaven! look for yourself, Watty!"

"I refuse to look," I cried, and I did not look, albeit I was burning to do so, for I have ever believed that, even if a woman's face be fair, her feet are not the less deserving of notice. But I would not look round.

"Let us hasten onward," I said. "The old fellow, for all his show of simplicity, hath many of the qualities of a fox; he will tell us before we sleep much that may be useful to us."

"Psha! the old fox hath no more talk than an old fox might be supposed to have; he talks of geese and ducks and such like dainties. He knows naught of the siege. Mayhap the grand-daughter will be able to impart to us some knowledge that shall be of value to us," he added, as if the notion had struck him suddenly.

"Brother," I cried, not without anger, "sorry am I that I ever entered upon this enterprise with you; and 'tis not yet too late for me to withdraw from it. If you have a desire to play the fool, I will e'en give you the chance of doing so without the embarrassment of my company."

"Peste! you blaze up like a very torch that hath been dipped in pitch!" he cried. "'Twas ever your way, my touchy brother, to take the worst for granted rather than the best. I simply aver that for a plain peasant colleen——"

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"I will hear no more of her, I tell you, sir," said I, still more sharply.

He retorted with such a string of strange French court phrases of impatience that I made haste to get far ahead of him. And in this order, the girl with the bare feet trudging heavily behind, and Harry walking with Dillon, we wended our way through the hollow of the slope and thence by a narrow boreen, as the old man directed, to what seemed to be the ruin of a small farm building in the midst of a cultivated patch which had once grown herbs and roots for the table, but which had plainly been dug over and thoroughly cleared of all produce. I had oft heard of the ravages committed by the locust of certain countries of the Bible; but for any earnest student of Holy Writ who wishes to realize such a territory, a glimpse of the land in the centre of which a hostile army hath encamped, will suffice. Cromwell's locusts had settled down upon the fairest tract of Tipperary, and had eaten up every green thing—nay, they showed themselves worse than any locust, for this will, I believe, devour only what appears over the surface of the field, but soldiers are ever delving for onions.

"'Tis a poor place, and unfit for your honour's excellence," said the old man, removing a door which was adroitly held up between two stones at the entrance to the house. "But if so be that you make no objection to the ass as a companion under the roof, 'tis at your service. The girl and the ass have the back room to themselves, and I have hopes that your honours are men of honour."

"Fear not for either," said Harry glibly. "The colleen will not fear either; having been for some time the close companion of an ass, she will look on us as near of kin to it."

"I'm slow of wit," said the old man, "but I

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would fain hope that your honour's excellence doth not mean to traduce the ass."

Harry laughed; the man spoke with such extreme simplicity, and for the life of me I could not say whether he had spoken with intent or by accident.

But we entered the house—the ass leading—and when the large flat stone that closed up the window was removed, light enough was admitted to let us see that the room was empty of all furnishing. A few osier creels, all of them in a bad state of repair, stood bottom uppermost about the earth of the floor to serve as seats, and a larger one was meant to discharge the office of a table. A bundle of heather in a corner bore the impress of a man's form; it was plainly meant to be a bed.

"A poor place for the quality that live in castles," said our host. "I don't doubt that your honours live in castles when you're at home; if so, you may find that another armful of heather will make this room liker what you're accustomed to."

"You are right," said I. "I'll set about the heather-gathering without delay, for I, for one, am sorely in need of a slumber."

I made haste out of the mustiness of the room, and within half an hour I had returned, bearing a huge armload of mountain heather, which, though somewhat damp, was still fresh and sweet.

But I let it drop in a heap on the threshold in my surprise to see that mercurial brother of mine with an arm round the waist of the old man's granddaughter while he kissed her on the face, not once, but twenty times.

And the wench did not seem to be greatly perturbed by his impudence!

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CHAPTER XXXVII

TO affirm that I was an-angered is not to go far. The truth is that I was scarcely ever so angry in my life. Think of it! There was that fellow ready to sacrifice all that a good man holds dear, for the sake of letting his lips rest on the smudgy face of a peasant girl!

He had set out on the emprise that we had in hand, in a high spirit of chivalry; we had passed through many dangers together, and now we were at the point of winning or losing all; and yet there he was, bussing a creature whom he had not seen two hours before—a wench who only hid the smudges of her face by the untidy rumpling of her hair!

"Sir," said I, intent to stab him with daggers of ice. "Sir, I deplore my indiscretion at entering unannounced an apartment which doubtless this fair and distinguished lady hath made to be her bower. Let me offer you my compliments upon your good taste and the exquisite fashion of your display of it in——"

But how could I complete my careful phrase when the fellow against whom it was directed fell back against the wall of the room in a roar of laughter—when the rude wench herself went off—only she had enough shame left her to turn her face to the wall—in a peasant girl's giggle and gurgle of laughter?

I had to change my tone. This was not a situation for rapier-thrusts but for shilelagh-shaking.

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"Libertine, leave this house!" I shouted, pointing to the door. "Leave this house which, though humble, is sacred to the——"

But Harry roared on like any bull calf, and the girl was shriller in her laughter than any cicala that laughs all a summer's day in a meadow.

I turned upon her in a fury.

"Girl—creature—I—I—I swear that I'll tell your grandfather!" I shrieked, for my rage made me shrill also.

Harry yelled in delight. I turned and took a step to the door.

"Walter—Walter—dear old Walter!"

It was now my turn to fall against the wall, for the voice was the voice of Finola, and looking round with my arms extended in my surprise on each side of me against the wall like an espalier pear tree, I saw Finola standing where the peasant colleen had stood. She had pushed back from her face the tresses which had been designedly untidy so as to conceal her features, and mayhap it was Harry who had kissed away her smudges. . . .

But I noted that all that Harry had said in admiration of her feet was the truth—the bare truth.

And there behind me was the ancient driver of the ass, only he now wore the refined smile of Father Mahony.

I had Finola in my arms in a moment, and if any smudge survived Harry's attack, the shame of it was quickly obliterated by me.

And then, for some cause, the meaning of which hath not yet been revealed to me, I found myself weeping—weeping for the joy of being once more by the side of those of whose safety I had not latterly been feeling confident, becoming aware, as I did in the course of our journey, of the number and the measure of the perils of the way.

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It was Father Mahony who laid his hand on my head, saying—

"Son, Walter, I knew that you were to be depended on. I knew that we should meet on this day, and not so far from this place."

But what was there left for me to say?

Well, I gave Father Mahony my hand, and then walked across the steeps and hollows of the earthen floor to brother Harry.

"Sir," said I, "you were quite right; she hath feet of a most beauteous shape."

Then I stooped over these same beauteous feet until I had well-nigh kissed them, saying—

"Madam, whatever people may tell us of the subtle knowledge of a lover in regard to his mistress, the truth remains the same, and it was I and not Harry who said that we should find you come hither."

"What!" she cried; "you tell me that you knew that without any prompting from another?"

"The monition did not come from that gentleman," said I.

"No; but it did come from another," said she. "Oh, believe me, dear brother Walter, you are on the threshold of much knowledge."

"I heard a voice speaking those very words in mine ear some nights ago," said I. "And that was on a night when I saw a boat sailing on a green sea with a girl sitting on a thwart and a man steering at the helm."

"A fitting symbol of the wedded life of a good man and a true woman," said Father Mahony quickly. "The green sea hath rocks beneath but the shallop that holds the man and the woman glides safely over them all if only the one who steers be a true helmsman—a true helpmeet—a true husband."

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"Sir, I have already taken one step across the threshold," said I.

That was all we said at that time touching the vision in the crystal. But of course Father Mahony with a few graceful wavings of the hands, had no difficulty in giving an assurance of his good faith in regard to my brother and myself, and when Harry said, with great gravity and a sternness that well-nigh provoked me to laughter :—

"Sir, you might have known well enough that I would not fail you in this undertaking," Father Mahony overcapped his sternness, saying—

"Dear son, I never doubted your truth or your prowess ; but think you that Finola's act in coming to the side of her father—the place assigned to her by Duty—would have been equally acceptable to Heaven had it involved no self-sacrifice ? Son Harry, she came hither leaving you behind her. She forsook for the time all the sweet association of true love at the mandate of Duty ; and I know that her oblation hath been accepted by Heaven."

Then we exchanged our experiences of the days just gone by ; and in due course we learned how Father Mahony had sailed his boat up the long estuary of the Shannon and had taken horse at Limerick and so journeyed with Finola by his side, to the house of one of his many friends on the borders of the County of Tipperary, where he had obtained disguises for himself and Finola, and where he had also found the faithful ass, which had been a great help to them. For four days he had driven the ass, with Finola walking barefoot by his side, into the camp of Cromwell, selling poultry and succulent shalots to the kitchens, and obtaining a considerable amount of knowledge of the intentions of the great general—Father Mahony never denied the greatness of Cromwell's generalship—which he never failed to communicate

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—he did not tell us how—to the greater general within the walls of Clonmel.

"There is no man living that could do all that Cromwell hath done," said Father Mahony, concluding his narrative. "And there is no general who could withstand him as O'Neill hath done. Children, let not one of you ever forget what you have seen this week. Whatsoever our enemies may aver, saying that Cromwell conquered Ireland, remember that at Clonmel O'Neill conquered Cromwell."

Thus it was that our faithful friend made an ample explanation to us of how it was that he had, with Finola, left Castle Omeragh saying that he was going to O'Brian's Tower. It was in order that our dear girl's act might be the more self-sacrificing. This explanation seemed to us to be not only natural but to bear testimony to the exalted standard of life set us by Father Mahony.

I may here mention that it was really quite remarkable how, after a year or two had passed, some of us began to entertain a suspicion that our dear monitor may have had other motives for his action than that high-minded impulse which he told us of and which, with bowed heads and reverent hearts, we had acknowledged to be consistent with his character. Such suspicions were unworthy to be entertained, but still they came to us; for I fear we were but gross men, with but a small sense of the life sublime.

When we had in a measure recovered from the exalting influences of Father Mahony's defining of his motives, one of us ventured to say something respecting the broad breach which Cromwell's cannon balls had made in the walls of the town, at which the priest smiled.

"You shall hear more of this breach," he said quietly.

And we did hear a good deal more of it; for the

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next dawn there came to us a man who told us that the wall had been so well battered in at its weakest point by the fire of the day before, that the whole of the leaguering army had spent the night in the singing of the most joyous psalms in their service-book—those that described, in a horrid doggerel, the splendid slaughters which formed the subject of the stately Hebrew poems put into such noble English in our own version of the Bible. Father Mahony's spy said that the singing had been unusually nasal, so that it might be assumed that the general assault upon the town would take place early in the day—in fact, as soon as the camp had broken its fast. When the Puritans' psalm-singing became very nasal, a fierce assault was imminent, we were told.

Now was our time to carry out our scheme of entering the town, we thought. If a general attack were made and defeated, a sortie would follow, and then we should have a good chance of joining our friends and returning with them. So spake Harry, and, after him, I myself. But Father Mahony said he was not altogether certain that General O'Neill would welcome another four or five mouths to feed daily. The fact was that the stock of victuals within the town had dwindled away so terribly that the outlook was becoming serious.

Our hearts sank within us at this news. It seemed to us ridiculous that such a paltry matter as a supply of victuals should be sufficient to outweigh the prospect of glory. But we had already come to learn that success in warfare meant nothing but success in feeding a large body of men for a large number of days. The fighting of a force is of no importance compared with the feeding of a force. During a campaign as well as a siege there is no converse among the men and their captains save

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on the subject of feeding. Any fool who might venture to prate of glory would be gazed at. After the first week in camp no one ever spoke of the glory of victory. Every man cursed the pinching which he felt in his guts and spoke with bated breath of a squadron of geese which might possibly be surprised; and for hours the correct tactics to be employed for the capture of a pig of tender years were debated. Harry told me that for days a quarrel had been maintained between the best of comrades on the question of the decoying of ducks, and that the taking of a turkey had brought about a duel with swords.

And here were we shut out from our friends simply because of the want of a side of pork!

There was, however, no power with us to enable us to escape from the thraldom of facts. If we were kept outside the walls of Clonmel by reason of the excellence of our appetites, we could do naught but submit.

But Harry did a deal of swearing.

On this morn we had no small trouble finding victuals enough for the breaking of our fast. We dared not light a fire lest we should attract the attention of some of those camp raiders who were ever coming and going along the hill tracks, and we had brought with us only a few pieces of dried venison, which it was our habit to shred as the farrier pareth the hoofs of a horse before the shoeing; and indeed the product of the one operation closely resembled that of the other; and it was but little improved when eaten with bread so hard that only the fiercest downward stab at it with a sharp dagger could break it. The goat's milk, however, with which we softened our hard lot was quite palatable.

And so we set off with great caution, and a mighty

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deal of casual concealment by every form of cover that was convenient, to witness the threatened assault upon the town. Dillon and I crept down the glen, and then up the low slope, ever slinking behind rocks and bushes when nearing the camp of our enemies. Harry, Father Mahony and Finola went by a less difficult way. We were all well armed, and we did not doubt being able to hold our own should we be attacked by any stragglers.

They were at it still! The sound of the psalm-singing rose strangely into the air, and the breeze bore it to our ears fitfully and with such wavering as took off some of the sharpness of its nasal qualities. It came to us now in a volume, and anon waning away till it was no louder than the moan of a wind through a wood of pines. And then all of a sudden the sounds ceased, and we heard the roar of a great cheer from the camp.

Dillon and I looked out from what was like to a loophole betwixt the two rocks that concealed us, and below us we saw the sight that ever stirs the heart of man mightily. The full force of the Roundhead army was moving into line and saluting the great general. There was a blaze of broadswords above the steel head-pieces and Monmouth caps—a lightning blaze as they were waved in the sunlight—for the morning was bright and clear; but soon the advancing pikes flashed into sight, making a flicker high above the bravery of the sabres, and the shouting of the men made a sort of thunder for all that continuous lightning, while the inexorable man who had moulded ten thousand strong men into his own pattern as easily as the skilled potter moulds his clay, rode slowly down the cheering lines.

A solitary figure—Oliver Cromwell.

I could feel myself breathing hard while I looked upon that great figure for the first time in my life.

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He had been oft described to me, but no point in any description had ever given me a glimpse of the man.

When he took off his head-piece, confronting the centre of his lines, I saw his face for the first time, and then I knew what he was.

I saw that he was the mightiest captain that England has ever known. He was not merely a leader of men; he was a maker of men. Men ceased to be themselves when nigh to him; they became part of him. He was the staff of Moses that swallowed up all the other staves when they were thrown to it. When the staves of King Pharaoh's magicians had, as serpents, merged their individuality in the snake-staff of Moses, they never were staves again; but the staff of the Leader became a staff again, and I doubt not that it was all the stronger and stouter for its meal.

Voracious indeed, and full of almighty, absorbing power, Cromwell was well fitted to be the staff of the great prophet who himself was the staff of the Lord God.

He had every quality that the Englishman respects and that an Irishman hates—that I could perceive the moment I saw that stern rugged face bearing no sign of any of those weaknesses which make a man beloved. I had heard of him that he was beloved by every member of his family, and that not one of them was he able to bend to his will. That meant that he was a begetter of lesser Cromwells.

I have his face before me now—that man who believed in himself and in his God, but in no lesser King—that man who in the name of liberty trampled English liberty under his iron heel—that tyrant who crushed within his fist every tyranny except that which he himself created.

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Cromwell—a brute beast with the soul of an archangel.

Cromwell— a sword beaten out of a ploughshare—a spear made out of a reaping hook.

And there I saw him riding down his lines while the men whom he had made—every man of them a little Cromwell—stood with their faces distorted by the awful exultation of the fanatic yelling, and roaring in a wild ecstasy of devotion.

It was a terrible thing—a thing to wonder at—a thing to shudder at ; but it was to me the revelation of a mighty man. I saw Oliver Cromwell, and at the same moment I saw Moses, and Joshua the son of Nun, and Elijah the Tishbite, and Judas Maccabaeus—a Zimri with the smug peace of a cock-sure Dissenter. Truly a terrible revelation, but I took off my hat when that fearful inexorable figure of manhood loomed before me albeit far off. Oliver Cromwell, the rod of the anger of the Lord God! Oliver Cromwell, the scorpion-lash for the backs of the people of England!

And now he had taken off his head-piece, and every man before him did the like. He bowed his head, and down went every head. I could hear no word of the prayer which he spoke, but it was a very long prayer, and I knew of what type was the prayer that would come from such a man at such an hour. A prayer full of humility as to its words and phases, but arrogant in its assumptions. A truly English prayer. The God of Battles was to be once more on the side of the English, and give strength to the arms of those who were to do battle for the preservation of the Truth. As Samuel hewed the heathen Agag in pieces, so might Cromwell be permitted to hew in pieces the heathen Irish within Clonmel—as David the King by the help of the Lord leaped over a wall, so might strength be given to every

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man in the army of the Parliament to leap over the wall of the town—as the walls of Jericho fell flat at the sound of the horns of the Chosen People, so might the walls of Clonmel melt away and become prone beneath the assault of the new Chosen People, and all the praise and the glory would be given to the name of the Most High.

Oh, I had no need to hear the prayer. I had heard enough of Puritan prayers to enable me to be sure of the very phrases of the one which Cromwell was uttering to discharge the duty of a Dutch dram to his soldiers.

And it did the duty of a whole flask to every man. When the General had resumed his head-piece and his men had followed his example, they all yelled like men filled with new wine. They threw their pikes into the air, they held up their great muskets after the manner of clubs, and some waved a musket in one hand and the rest in the other.

Then all became silent, and the General stood up in his stirrups and made his speech to his men urging them on to slaughter I heard no word of that speech, but I knew every phrase that it contained; and at the moment of its ending—if his prayer was intolerably long the speech was commendably brief—the cannons from the camp tower began to speak; but not a sound came from the walls.

"They will spare their fire for the defence of the breach, and by my soul, 'twill need all the defending that they can give it," said Harry.

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CHAPTER XXXVIII

WE shifted our quarters to allow of our seeing the breach in the wall. Up to that moment we had been so placed behind the large rocks, with a mound behind us, that we could see nothing of the walls of the town. The mound shut them off from us; but when the army made a move we knew that we too might move. We crawled on our hands and knees round the mound, keeping ourselves still concealed from the observation of any possible straggler or camp follower, and then the walls, with that horrible breach, were before our eyes.

I confess that my heart sank within me seeing how broad was that breach. A whole company of soldiers might have marched abreast through it into the town. We could see that hundreds of the garrison were engaged in its repairs, endeavouring to replace some of the masonry that had been dislodged; but we could have laughed, if it were not for the pure pity of it, at these efforts. They suggested nothing so closely as the working of a child on the sands before the fishers' village of Kilkee, who builds up a bank of sand to resist the tide of the Atlantic.

There they were, men as thick as ants on an ant-heap, toiling away with clink of pickaxe and ring of trowel, building up a sand hill in the vain hope of keeping out that irresistible Atlantic tide which was rolling onward to the town.

"The day is lost!" said Dillon. "It is left

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for us only to believe that General O'Neill hath become distraught. Were it otherwise he would never be so foolish as to fancy that a repairing of the breach at such an hour would delay the assault by five minutes. He is mad! He should be resting his garrison instead of working them. When the assault comes they will have no strength left them to resist. The day is lost!"

Could there be any doubt of it? We soon began to hear the roar of that Atlantic which was rolling toward the breach, and in a short space the first waves, so to speak, had appeared before our eyes; and indeed, the light shining upon the steel caps of the troops as they advanced showed them to us like waves of the sea. They marched steadily, slowly, doggedly, irresistibly on; and the mouth of every man was wide open as he joined in the roaring forth of the Psalm of assault. So nigh were we to them that we could even observe the varieties of what the French term the grotesque in the expressions of the men's faces as they sang. Some with their eyes closed to the merest slit in the ecstasy of a high note, others with their beards on their breastplates, labouring beneath the depression of a rumbling basso, some showing great rows of tusks through which they bawled, others with mouth screwed far up into the cheek as though they were endeavouring to sing into their own ear! Oh, the villainy in the expression on the face of the toothless ones!

But the effect of the whole choir—the tuneless, straggling choir—seemed to me to be nothing save what was majestic. That rolling, roaring, Atlantic tide of men went onward, as majestic in its swing as any sea that swings singing to the shore.

He rode at the head of his army—a long way ahead of the first line—that mighty man of war.

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His sword was bare in his hand, and methought that now and again he tried to mark the metre of the Psalm by waving its blade; but powerful though he was, such a task was too much for him; it was not within the compass of man's skill to mark the measure of that which had neither time nor tune. His men enjoyed complete independence of action in throat power, and he loved them too well to make the least attempt to curtail the freedom of any one of them.

But now I noted that he held his head high. He rode with the easy confidence of one going to victory, and the determination on his face was the determination of a man to earn a victory.

"By all the powers! 'tis myself that would follow that monster to the mouth of the pit itself—nay, through it—through it—on to the uttermost corner where the fire rages most fiercely!" yelled Dillon, when the first taps of the drum rattled through the air, and the bugles began to sound.

"And I—by my soul, I would fight against him until one of us was landed there," said I. "But I feel with you, Dillon—I feel with you: he is not a man to be resisted. 'Twere vain to make the attempt. He is riding to victory."

That was all that we said between ourselves at that time. The drums beat, the bugles blared, and the great army swung round, battalion after battalion falling into its place in good order, albeit there was no bravery of marching. We knew quite well that the movement was one of a concentrated attack. The full force of the attack was to be directed against the breach in the wall, and to this point the whole strength of the army was to converge. Only there was a small reserve of men marched off to the West gate to hold it against possible fugitives. It was clear that Cromwell

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meant the slaughter at Clonmel to repeat the awful tale of Drogheda and Wexford.

Then the cannons on the ramparts began to roar, and well indeed were they served. Dillon, the veteran gunner who had in the past planted many a round shot among these very troops, was deeply moved with every discharge—especially when he saw a great gap made in the advancing force—and many an one was made.

"Why am I not on the other side of that wall?" I heard him growl. "Why the ——" and his inquiries were not wholly free from those oaths which I have heard were in too frequent use among the Royalist army.

"O'Neill's gunners are making very good practice," said I, and pointed to where a shot had plunged into the midst of the advancing lines, cleaving its way through them, and stretching at least six men on the ground. But no one looked at them. The ranks closed up and the advance was not checked for one minute.

Then came some confusion of musketry, for the breach in the wall was filled up with musketeers, and behind them we could see the gleam of the pike heads. The assault would not take place without meeting a stern defence. But I knew that it would be of no use. I knew that as soon as the order was given to take the breach, that order would be carried out. Nothing could stop that tide rolling toward the wall.

And so it proved. We saw the General stand up in his stirrups pointing with his sword toward the breach, at which musketeers were aiming, and we knew that he was ordering the pikemen to charge for the town.

And charge they did. It was a fine sight to witness, but for us it was as hard to witness as

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the sight of a chase is to the workers in the fields who cannot take part in it. For my self—and I think I may take it on me to speak for Dillon as well—it would have been at that moment a matter of indifference whether I was on the side of the attackers or the defenders, so long as I had a chance of striking to right and left. On the Cromwellians charged through the great rolling volumes of smoke made by the fire of the men with the matchlocks who had made a rush forward and poured a volley into the breach. That smoke hid everything from us. But out of it rode the General at a gallop, followed by Colonel Ireton and another mounted officer of the staff, making for the reserve force, which he was to lead presently, and on poured the mighty tide toward the walls, being hurled through the smoke which seemed as dense as a wall of masonry.

When the clouds crawled slowly away there was no breach to be seen in the walls—it was filled up with men, and they were all pouring through into the town as I have seen the floods pour into the valley when the bank of the mill-dam had burst. On they rushed with shouts and cheers but faintly heard by us afar off.

The fighting at the breach could not have lasted longer than a minute or two, It was feebler than we could ever have believed that it should be. And now the men were pouring and pouring into the town.

"A mill-race—a mill-race!" said Dillon, whose thoughts had gone on the same lines as my own. "All is over. Clonmel is taken, and the day is the worst that Ireland has known."

"There was not even a check," said I. "The defence was the defence of an egg shell. It collapsed beneath a single blow."

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And on still the men poured into the breach until scarce a regiment remained without, and these were pressing forward in all eagerness, but failing to force their way through by reason of the crush of the army in front of them.

And all this was done in silence—scarce a shot was fired after the first great volley—silence so far as we were concerned, though I doubt not all was noisy enough in the neighbourhood of the attack.

But suddenly, as it seemed to us, there came the sound of volley firing—such volley firing as we had never before heard—a continuous rattle of musketry ——but had we heard no sound we should still have known how fierce was that fire by the volume of smoke that ascended and hung lazily on the air.

"They were wise; they reserved their fire until they had entered the town: they are firing in platoons in the streets," said Dillon.

"That means that the massacre hath begun," said I.

"And we on this side of the wall!" groaned my companion. "Oh, Master Walter, that ever we should have lived to see this day! Up with the reinforcement, Wolf Oliver—up, Wolf of the hungry jowl; the bloody banquet awaits thee. Even thy greedy maw will be glutted before nightfall."

As if the General had heard him, up came Cromwell at the head of his two thousand men, and sword in hand charged for the breach.

He never reached it.

Out from that same breach came a torrent of wild men—furious, distraught, irresistible—men bare-head, some half-naked, grasping broken muskets—broken pike-poles—they struck the advancing force

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in the centre and smashed it into pieces as a wedge breaks into splinters the hard log into which it is driven. The general was unhorsed and his charger galloped furiously toward the camp; and in another instant the whole terrain before our eyes was overrun with flying, panic-stricken men; and still the musket fire went on and the turgid stream tumbled from the breach and made for the plain; man after man dropped, some under the walls—some half-way to the camp—others rushing to right and left in the wild fury of the distraught; and all were Cromwellians.

What was the marvel that had taken place? How had an attack that seemed nothing more than a march to victory, been changed to a rout just at the moment when its success seemed to be assured?

We lost control of ourselves in our excitement, and leaving our place of hiding, ran toward the town for more than a hundred yards. We thought not of danger to our skins, We knew by instinct that the fugitives were left with no fight in them—flight, not fight, was the demon that had entered into them. And some fell at our very feet with ghastly wounds—faces slashed, heads cloven well-nigh in twain, arms lopped and hanging on to shoulders by no more than a band of flesh.

We gripped a burly fellow by the shoulder before he knew that we were upon him—he looked not for an assault from the front of him: everything that he feared was behind him. He gazed at us with the eyes of a wild man, full of terror. He threw down the stock of his musket—it had no barrel.

"Shoot me fairly and honestly if ye be men; shoot me quick that I may the sooner forget what I have seen."

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"Sir, we will harm you not if you tell us what hath happened," said I.

He gazed into my face and his lips began to move, but no sound came from them. I could see that he was struggling to speak. He utterly failed. The man had been stricken dumb before our very eyes, and he knew it, and began making vague, clumsy signs, pointing to the town, thumping his chest, and then simulating the thrusting of a pike, gesticulating fiercely, but conveying no more sense to us than would the gibberings of a baboon.

Dillon found another fugitive. This one was on the ground striving to bind up a bullet wound on his leg. He was less distraught than the first. We lent him a hand to staunch the flow of blood, and after a space he was able to tell us something of the terror of that brief and marvellous fight.

"We charged through the breach in the wall—it had never been defended in earnest—all a piece of strategy to lure us in—in we tumbled, one treading on another's heels, one urging another on with the stock of his musket—a trap—we had rushed headlong into a trap—such as never had been devised since war began in this world; O'Neill is a general—an Irish hound, it may be; well, we have felt his fangs—my leg—but such a trap! Sirs, every man, woman, and child within those walls must have passed the night in building up a wall, bricks, stones, logs of wood, carcases of animals—and by the Lord Harry, I noted two coffins and a dresser of oak, just the fellow to the one that stood in the kitchen of the house I was born in, a mile from Godalming, in the County of Surrey. Pah! why should I recall the old days at this time—tell me that?"

"A wall built—where—where, man—not behind the breach?" cried Dillon.

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"From the wall at each side of the breach, I tell you," said the man. "I tell you that none could see from the outside—it made a fine trap, I tell you. We charged through the breach and were caught like rats in a trap. The walls of the trap were built so as to make a lane for an hundred yards or so, it may be, but I dare swear more. Into it we all rushed *paile maile*, and found when too late that we were in a trap, for we were at the bottom of a sack. We found ourselves facing a built-up wall at the end of the lane, and no way out but the way of our entering. Slaughter! they shot us down by the score—my captain—a thrust of an Ulster pike in the stomach—they piked us—rats in a trap, I tell you—and when the thousands pressed on us from behind we became—have you ever seen a cider press when the apples have been mashed and slashed and bashed about for a day? We have made good enough cider in our village; but to my palate there's nothing can be made to taste like the Somerset—Lord, for a gulp of Somerset cider this day—Blood, I tell you—that cider press which crushed us and mashed us out of the semblance of men ran red blood—look at my feet—blood over the ankles—not all my own. They slaughtered us from above—they crushed in on us from behind—our own comrades charged us, and then we had to fight our way out . . . Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Our God is a strong tower! They that seek Me early shall find Me, saith the Lord God! Think ye, sirs, that when Agag the Amalekite was hewn in pieces—see First Samuel—the prophet felt wearyful? I tell you, nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish! But still I sing Hallelujah, and my feet shall become as beautiful upon the mountains as the feet of them that bring glad tidings. Oh, God of battles . . . "

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The poor wretch began to roar and to blaspheme with so shocking a freedom that I do not believe he would be tolerated in the forecastle of any moderate ship.

But what had not the poor fellow undergone during the previous half-hour?

We left him on the ground, having regained our senses when our curiosity was fully sated by the fellow's snatches. We now knew all that had happened after that fierce rush had been made by Cromwell's men through the breach. O'Neill had through the night caused a wall to be built of such materials as he had at hand, out from the ramparts, so that the breach became the entrance to a long *cul de sac*, into which the troops had charged, only to be slaughtered by the garrison—shot, stabbed to the death with pikes, overwhelmed by crags tumbled down on them by the women.

We had heard enough of the rambling story to give us ample knowledge of the success of General O'Neill's strategy. Cromwell had met his match at last—more than his match.

We found our friends at the little farm-building where we had slept the night before. We kissed Finola, cheering her in that she was the daughter of the general who had saved Ireland.

Finola, being the daughter of a great soldier, wept for long; and then, being a woman, she turned upon us, with outstretched finger, saying quietly but decisively,

"I told you so."

And we all agreed that she had told us that because her father was defending Clonmel, it would never be taken by Cromwell's troops.

But O'Neill had yet to perform a greater feat of arms than he had just accomplished; for that very night he marched every fighting man out of

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the town, and Cromwell had no knowledge of the transaction. The next day the Mayor of Clonmel sent a trumpet and a flag to Cromwell, asking for terms for the surrender of the town, and the latter put his seal to a parchment offering all within the walls freedom, and guaranteeing their safety.

When the Mayor and Cromwell met outside the town and the seals were affixed, the great Captain said—

"Send to me your General O'Neill without delay. He is a vile rebel, but he is a man. Send him to me."

"Sir," replied the Mayor, "I cannot do your bidding by reason of the fact that O'Neill and his army, believing that they had done all that was demanded of them, set out last night for the walled City of Limerick, and thither your Excellency may seek him."

The one who told me this portion of the story—and he was a Captain in the Army of the Parliament—affirmed that, on hearing that he had once more been tricked by an Irishman, Cromwell swore only the oaths of a truly God-fearing man; but this is certain: he saw that every article on the parchment was duly honoured. Not a drop of blood was shed within Clonmel that day, and on the next Cromwell took shipping for England.

What more is there left for me to tell of those old days? I have no more than a word, and that word is happiness. Happiness came to me with my beloved Kathleen, and took up a place at our fireside, and I doubt not that brother Harry was happy when His Majesty King Charles the Second knighted him, casting a side glance (it is said) at the lovely young Irish wife of the new-dubbed Sir Harry.

Father Mahony tells me in a letter that he too is

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happy (in a measure). He hath come to the conclusion that His Majesty, though a Catholic at heart, is something of a time-server; but he hath great hopes of his brother, His Royal Highness, James, Duke of York, and of the firm establishing of a Catholic succession in England. He adds that this will take time, and ever when I think upon the matter I agree with him.

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